

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 28 (1960)
Heft: 9

Rubrik: Cuttings from English Newspapers

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Cuttings from English Newspapers

Homosexuality

Sir, — The whole subject of homosexuality seems be-devilled by two considerations: the question of what is natural and unnatural, and whether it is a disease. Could we see clearly on these two issues, without emotion or prejudice, we should be able to make a true assessment of the subject and thereby give the greatest help to homosexuals.

It seems to me that to speak of homosexuality as unnatural is to misuse terminology: natural can either mean that which is according to the nature of man, whether physical or spiritual, or that which is according to the particular nature of a particular individual. On neither of these grounds can homosexuality be regarded as unnatural: physically speaking, man belongs to the animal world; and that world, judging by its behaviour, is relatively indifferent to sameness or difference of sex in its sexual desires. Spiritually speaking what differentiates the human from the animal is that the human does not regard sexual desire as the only motive for action — in other words lust is unnatural, love of any kind is never unnatural. If, on the other hand, we are speaking of that which is according to the nature of a particular individual, then surely homosexuality is natural to a homosexual, as certainly as heterosexuality is natural to a heterosexual. The only way in which the term unnatural can be used of sexual relations between the same sex is from a purely biological standpoint, in that bodies of the same sex are obviously not formed for sexual fulfilment in the same way as bodies of opposite sexes. That, however, is to restrict the term natural to a purely biological sense and to forget emotional motivation and physical desire, which are as natural to man as biological necessity.

Nor can I see any evidence which would lead one to think of homosexuality as a disease or even a neurosis in the sense in which the latter word is usually used. In certain societies, notably the Greek world, homosexual relations were regarded as the most noble and right relations and were almost universal: are we then to think that all Greeks had unhappy home backgrounds? Or is it not rather a matter of what is or is not socially acceptable? I am very dubious, from the evidence of many a psychologist who has spoken to me, whether homosexuality can ever be 'cured': most of the so-called 'cures' I suspect are really of bi-sexuals rather than of homosexuals. All that can be said of homosexuality is that it is probably a retarding of sexual development, which yet has little or no effect on the rest of the personality.

If we were to stop thinking of homosexuality as either unnatural or a disease, we should understand how best to help the homosexual, which is surely to encourage him to develop his personality to the full in the highest rather than the lowest way: to help him to find someone whom he can love, rather than let him waste his energies and his life in promiscuous and unsatisfying physical desire; and not to place any legal or social barriers in the way of his finding that love. If he could do so, his life would be as fulfilled as is the life of any other human being and he would no longer need furtively to try to find temporary satisfaction of a physical need. It is going to be difficult enough for him to find such love even if society helps him, it is going to be impossible if society pursues its present path of pursuing him with the law and with social ostracism. If we wish homosexuals to go on in their present corrupted and lustful pattern of life, we are doing all we can to encourage them in the present state of public opinion. As a Christian priest I would say that the fulfilment of love is never wrong, the mere satisfaction of animal lust is always wrong.

D. A. Rhymes, Vicar

All Saints New Eltham, SE 9

(From: *The New Statesman*)

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1. The first part of the document is a header section containing the title "THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" and the author "BY JAMES M. SMITH, LL.D." followed by the publisher information "NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO., 15 N. 2ND ST. 1884."

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