

enigma as insoluble. Ironically, at the very same Vatican conference at which the present Pope spoke thus, Stephen Hawking put forward a hypothesis suggesting that science need not forever find a singularity at the beginning of space-time. Some have taken this to mean that science may not forever need the hypothesis of a creation.

This would not have worried Lemaître. For him, there could never be any question of “reducing the Supreme Being to the rank of a scientific hypothesis.”

In his popular book *A Brief History of Time*, Professor Hawking puts it rather differently. He concludes that “the ultimate triumph of human reason” will be to know “the mind of God”.

Lemaître would not have challenged this, just as he did not challenge Hoyle’s assertion that the opposition to the “steady state” theory (a theory now discredited by the cosmic radiation) came from “Judaeo-Christian fundamentalism”. He would simply have gone on quietly working for all the triumphs of which human reason is capable, while pursuing what for him seemed a surer path to the mind of God.

The “Problem” of Homosexuality

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W.E.B. Dubois, speaking of his experience of being a black man in North America in 1903, wrote:

Between me and the other world is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying it directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.¹

For Dubois, the greatest injustice that African-Americans faced was not the outright malevolence of the ignorant, but the general tendency of even the enlightened to assume that blacks, by virtue of their being physically different from the majority of those in the dominant ethos, posed some kind of problem that needed to be addressed. Even those who "accepted" Dubois and treated him respectfully caused him to wonder why he needed to be "accepted" in the first place, and why he could not assume the respect of others. Dubois realized that the oppression and injustice he experienced was deeply rooted in the very presumption that his physical distinctiveness outweighed the immense commonality he shared with others and called into question his status not only in this culture but in the human community. Dubois wondered why one of his unique physical characteristics was problematic, while any other number of his other specific physical traits were not.

The experience of many gay and lesbian people is similar to that described by Dubois.² Homosexuality³ is a problem for most Western cultures, particularly those influenced or dominated by Christianity. Whether they are accepted or rejected, most gays experience the deep alienation of being a problem, and must ultimately ask why the validity of their sexuality and humanity is a question in the first place. While there is no question that persons who have a homosexual orientation make up a small but consistent minority of any given culture, it is not at all clear why those with this particular socio-sexual characteristic are marked out for special scorn and derision, and why this one trait so imperils or negates the basic human dignity and commonality that homosexuals share with the rest of the community. The ultimate question posed by the presence of homosexuality in our culture is not "what to do about this problem?" but, "why do cultures single out and reject some members of the culture by treating them as problems?"

Homosexuality (and the growing awareness that a homosexual orientation is a constitutive characteristic of a certain segment of the population) poses a particular problem for the various mainline Christian churches and especially the Roman Catholic Church. On the one hand, whether or not the homosexual orientation is good or bad, the ongoing and systematic oppression of gays and lesbians violates the most basic gospel demands for justice and for the preferential treatment for the poor, the outcast, and the alien; the Christian communities' collusion in this oppression and violence is increasingly being recognized for the scandal and betrayal that it is. On the other hand, the presence in the community of persons who are acknowledged as having a fundamentally different sexual orientation, suggests that there may be persons for whom the traditional moral framework simply does not and

cannot apply, especially if this framework was developed under the implicit assumption that all persons have a heterosexual orientation.

I propose that the phenomenon of homosexuality, and the experience of gay and lesbian Christians, constitute fundamentally new data that have not and cannot be accounted for within the traditional systems of Roman Catholic morality. Our new knowledge of homosexuality challenges and, ultimately, requires us not only to reformulate our traditional moral teaching, but to initiate a wider theological reflection on the phenomenon of homosexuality based upon the experience of homosexual persons. In what follows I will propose that we must first of all reformulate the process by which we discern moral issues in the Catholic tradition; then I will suggest some new perspectives for dealing with homosexuality in particular; and finally I will propose two pastoral conclusions.

Reformulating the Process of Moral Discernment

To Roman Catholics, calls for reformulation and reevaluation of traditional teaching may initially sound vaguely suspicious and substantially hollow. Many Catholic theologians generally assume that human nature remains constant, and that the foundational principles and critical issues facing humanity have all been addressed in either the Bible or tradition. It falls to each generation to interpret and adapt these two sources in the light of their current situation, responding to all new problems by drawing on the past. Any "new" teaching must be consistent with and based upon some past teaching, and may deviate only by way of adding to and not cancelling or overturning the past. In the best sense this is what is meant by a living tradition. Unfortunately, this image of tradition can also be stifling and deadening if it fails to take account of the fact that new data can arise, and that genuinely new human experiences must be taken into account.

The natural law approach to moral discourse, at its best, especially as exemplified by Thomas Aquinas, offers a more nuanced account of the process of moral discernment. The natural law tradition was founded on the proposition that right action is that which most conforms to reality. There was, therefore, in that tradition, a fundamental openness to discovering what is real by examining the world and learning from lived experience. While this system established firm principles and norms, and was relatively uncritical of the "a priori" assumptions through which it viewed reality, it generally remained open and flexible in regard to many issues. It certainly rejected the tendency to close the process of inquiry, and draw strict and narrow conclusions from inviolable principles and norms.⁴

In the long and dialectical development of theology and church teaching, this natural law tradition was basically co-opted by other systems of moral reasoning that tended to be more rigid, closed, and deontological in scope.⁵ As a result, a great deal of Catholic moral teaching in this century, especially in regard to sexual issues, has been hesitant to do more than simply and uncritically reiterate the traditional paradigm of human sexuality and the narrow anthropology that underlies it. While there has been an ongoing pastoral attempt to adapt and modify some aspects of the received paradigm (especially in regard to the ends of marriage and the value of conjugal love), there has been almost no willingness to critically reassess and reevaluate this paradigm, let alone entertain the possibility that a substantially new paradigm may need to be developed.

The tendency to resist all attempts to open a wider dialogue on sexual and other moral issues is self-defeating at many levels, but it is most pernicious when it undermines the very validity of the truth claims on which the wider tradition rests. Knowledge of the truth is not a matter of assenting to given "a priori" propositions developed in the cultural milieu immediately preceding our own. Genuine knowledge is the product of a cumulative, progressive, and communal process of inquiry — a process that is open-ended and fallible, from which truth tends to emerge. This process does not start anew in each generation, but does assume that the growing convergence of new data may eventually require the adaptation or abandonment of previously settled beliefs.⁶ Far from discouraging continuing investigation, extended dialogue, and experimentation, this understanding of knowledge is based upon the continual practice of these.

If we were to reclaim the tradition as an ongoing historical process of communal inquiry and moral discernment, it would be possible to develop a moral framework that is consistent with the past, but not confined by it. This image of moral teaching can account for genuine growth and development of information and human experience, while not devolving into mere relativistic utilitarianism. In this process it would be possible to examine and integrate fundamentally new insights about the human situation, as well as the received wisdom and knowledge of other cultures and traditions not previously in dialogue with the Christian West. In other words, it is necessary to expand our current model of moral discourse so as to account for a growth in knowledge and a development of culture.

In this context, the issue of homosexuality presents itself as both a problem and an opportunity for Roman Catholic moral teaching. It is a problem because it constitutes genuinely new data that have simply not

been reckoned with in the existing paradigm. The current consensus on the phenomenon of homosexuality challenges the basic assumptions on which Catholic anthropology and its consequent moral reasoning in regard to sexual reasoning rest. It presents an issue that was not adequately addressed in the tradition because the full scope of the issue has really only been known in this century. Nevertheless, homosexuality also represents an opportunity to re-evaluate the entire paradigm of human sexuality, affirming what is valid and reformulating what is no longer viable.

New Perspectives on Homosexuality

There is a growing consensus among commentators on all sides of the issues surrounding homosexuality, that our understanding of homosexuality as a fundamental orientation, condition, or state of life is a recent development in the West — probably emerging only in the late 19th and early 20th century with the rise of the discipline of psychology.⁷ Before that time, while homosexual acts were known and judged in various ways, there was only a narrow conception of homosexuality as an alternative form of sexual orientation. In general, both Scripture and the subsequent moral discourse tended to view homosexuality as the inverted or perverted sexual acts of heterosexual persons; the assumption being that all persons were essentially heterosexual (according to our conceptual framework). Furthermore, homosexual acts were usually viewed as an almost exclusively male phenomenon, and homosexual relationships were narrowly defined as those involving sexual intercourse.⁸ This is not to say that there was no nuanced recognition that homosexuality was something more than the arbitrary and perverted sex acts of heterosexuals. The later tradition did distinguish between an innate or inherent predisposition to homosexuality among some persons which did, in effect, limit their freedom and call for a more sympathetic pastoral approach. This aspect of the tradition, however, never moved much beyond identifying homosexuality as a perversion. A wider understanding of homosexuality as a fundamental sexual predisposition and as a type of interpersonal relationship was simply not possible.

Today almost everyone would recognize that there is a fundamental distinction between heterosexually and homosexually orientated people.⁹ Both of the recent Vatican documents dealing with sexual issues¹⁰ affirm that there is a “homosexual condition” that must be distinguished from homosexual acts, and that must be evaluated in its own right. While these documents maintain reservations about the moral value of this “condition”, they do insist that this condition is a reality that must be

taken into consideration.¹¹ While psychologists and other social theorists research and debate the “causes” of this unique condition, and while theologians and ethicists debate the moral implications of a homosexual orientation, there is general agreement that homosexuality is the dominant and constitutive type of sexual orientation for a small, but consistent, percentage of the population.

It is not fully accurate, therefore, to refer to the “traditional teaching” on homosexuality, because the Roman Catholic tradition has only just acknowledged homosexuality, in the current sense of the term, in the last twenty-five years, and still has not taken seriously the depth and complexity of this issue. Before this century the conceptual framework to make the distinction between a person, a person with a homosexual orientation, and homosexual acts, could only be understood in negative moral terms. While the tradition usually distinguished between persons and acts, orientation, as a complex psychological reality, is really a new category. Almost all references to homosexuality therefore, are basically referring to a form of adultery, sexual misconduct, or perversity that involved or led to “unnatural” sexual intercourse between two men. While our present understanding of homosexuality includes shared sexual encounters between members of the same sex, it is not exhausted by this dimension. Homosexuality as “lifestyle”, as a characteristic type of interpersonal relationship, and as a fundamental experience of one’s humanity was simply never accounted for nor addressed by the tradition previously to our time.

Consequently, the entire discussion of homosexuality constitutes a new chapter in Christian moral discourse. This endeavour will be marked by the attempt to understand how sexuality is to be integrated into the whole of one’s life; how one’s sexual orientation shapes one’s overall vocation in the Christian community; how people of differing sexual orientations can support and sustain one another in their vocations; and how we can envision and articulate the fundamental commonality between people of various sexual orientations. While the tradition holds many resources for this process of inquiry, it is simply no longer valid to use the tradition to condemn homosexuality or to impede a profound analysis and discussion of this issue. It is incumbent upon us to step back from any narrow debate on the moral validity of individual homosexual acts, and to examine the wider issues posed by the presence of at least two distinct forms of fundamental sexual orientation in the human community.¹²

The Starting Point for Discernment

The Roman Catholic tradition of moral discourse has always tended to frame moral questions in terms of the common good. A communal or social ideal and the demands of justice have been the foundation of Catholic moral inquiry. Over against current Western cultural attempts to reduce most moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and economic activity to the realm of individual choice and personal values, the Catholic tradition insists that these issues must be seen in their wider social context. In a similar way it is important to begin any discussion of homosexuality by framing it in terms of justice, and especially in the light of the great social justice movements of our time.

An inadequate conception of homosexuality as morally unacceptable perversion decisively narrowed the scope of the issue to the level of individual moral activity. The current understanding of homosexuality, however, requires that we reconceive the entire context of the problem, because homosexuality is not merely a type of sexual behaviour, and the fundamental issues surrounding homosexuality are not solely aspects of sexual morality. The presence of homosexual persons in society first of all raises the question of justice: How do the people who share this characteristic fit into the wider society? How is this minority treated by the majority? Any serious treatment of homosexuality must begin by acknowledging the deep injustice and violence experienced by homosexuals within both the Christian community and the broader culture. The proper starting point for critical reflection on the issue of homosexuality, therefore, is with an analysis of the social conditions that systematically exclude, oppress, and degrade homosexual persons.¹⁹

It is important to clarify here that there is a distinction to be made between the Church's judgement of and condemnation of the sexual behaviour of any group or individual, and the Church's respect for and promotion of the basic human dignity and rights that naturally belong to all persons. The Church has the right, and even the responsibility, to critically reflect upon and enunciate clear principles in regard to proper human conduct, and its conclusion that homosexual acts or behaviour is not morally acceptable, does not necessarily violate the rights and human dignity of any person. For instance, even if the Church does undertake the serious dialogue, theological reflection, and re-evaluation of its moral teaching that I am proposing. I assume there will be some aspects and types of homosexual activity that it will deem irresponsible and immoral. But, on the other hand, if the Church either uses these conclusions to support, justify, or rationalize discrimination and the suppression of human rights of homosexual persons, or if it is unwilling

to listen seriously to the voices of homosexual persons and to reconsider its moral teachings in the light of new information and experience, then the Church, consciously or not, is responsible for violating not only human rights, but its own most deeply held principles. It is the latter form of activity to which I am referring when I criticize the Church's collusion with and participation in social injustice.

If scripture and the tradition have not adequately addressed the reality of homosexuality, and may offer differing and even contradictory accounts of human sexuality, it is indisputable that there is a clear, constant, and unified tradition opposing all forms of hatred, intolerance, and violence directed at any persons or groups of people. There is a two-thousand-year-old polemic against discrimination and hatred that can reliably be traced to the lips of the founder of the Christian community. Papal social teaching for more than one hundred years has consistently defended the absolute human dignity of each person before God, and the fundamental value of every person in the human community. In this light, the treatment of homosexuals by non-homosexuals seems to be a flagrant and unacceptable form of injustice, and a gross violation of the most basic practical demands of the tradition. The scope and vehemence of the injustice done to homosexuals by the wider society and the Christian community, greatly outweighs any immoral behaviour that could be done by individual homosexuals, or by the entire community of homosexual persons in any given society. This realization unequivocally obliges any discussion of homosexuality to begin with a thorough and clear condemnation of the unjust social structures that violate the human dignity of homosexuals, and with an analysis and articulation of the sin and evil that underlie these structures.

An investigation of Scripture, especially from the point of view of the hermeneutics offered by both feminist and liberation perspectives,¹⁴ reveals an important insight into the status of homosexual persons in the Christian community. The nearly constant witness of Scripture is that God historically "weighs in" on the side of the outcast, the alien, and the victims of injustice. Furthermore, the Gospels consistently proclaim the validity and even primacy in God's eyes of those pushed to the peripheries of the religious and secular communities. In God's reign it is precisely those who have been unjustly excluded and denigrated by the dominant and social ethos who will be welcomed into and enjoy primacy of place in the new order. Likewise, it is to the outcasts that Jesus has a special ministry, and through whom the revelation of God's reign is most evident. Throughout the Gospels Jesus points out that the real problem confronting the blind, the sick, and the lame is not their personal handicaps, but the profound social sin that penalizes them for

simply being subject to the course of nature. All of this suggests that a more thorough analysis of the “problem” of homosexuality should be centered on the tendency for society to create outcast groups, and on the readiness with which Christian communities adopt and rationalize this behaviour, in spite of the fact that it clearly contradicts the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Whether homosexual acts themselves are right or wrong, it is a manifest violation of justice to systematically stigmatize and dehumanize an entire segment of population. Furthermore, the integrity of the gospel witness is at stake when the validity and even primacy of those socially determined to be aliens, outcasts and marginalized is not acknowledged as a precondition for any broader discussion of their lives and their role in the Christian community.

Reclaiming Teaching

To re-evaluate and reformulate the traditional Catholic paradigm of human sexuality does not necessarily mean that it is to be discarded. On the contrary, the basic understanding of human sexuality communicated through the centuries is quite rich and insightful. The recent adaptation and development of this paradigm since Vatican II has greatly clarified and expanded the understanding of sexuality in our time.¹⁵ While this approach to moral issues may not be adequate to account for the new data mentioned above, there is much in it that is quite helpful. The heart of Catholic teaching on sexuality and relationships is that the fullness of the individual human nature is generally fulfilled in a unitive and procreative covenantal relationship with another person of the opposite sex.¹⁶ Monogamous and loving heterosexual marriage, open to and centered on the rearing of children, is the ideal upon which most Catholic moral discourse is based. Other forms of personal vocation and fulfillment are possible (especially celibacy), but the normal vocation and lifestyle of the great majority of people will be marriage and family. This monogamous, unitive and procreative relationship is the basic building block of society and the context in which all alternative forms of relationship must be judged.

This ideal allowed the tradition to develop a framework for sexuality and relationships that integrated all aspects of human sexual activity. This framework put sexuality in a wider perspective by connecting sexual activity with the whole continuum of activity geared toward achieving the ideal of conjugal love. In this continuum, sex cannot be separated from love, love cannot be separated from commitment, commitment cannot be separated from the covenantal commitment of marriage, and marriage cannot be separated from the creation of children and the building of community. No part of this

continuum can be separated out and experienced independently, nor can the whole spectrum be systematically or fundamentally excluded in any significant relationship. So just as one cannot have sexual intercourse totally apart from and excluding the creation of children, two people cannot truly be married who do not share a deep and committed love for one another, or never express this love sexually.

While it was obvious that not everyone could live up to this ideal, it was generally assumed that the ideal applied to everyone. The only exceptions were those people who chose to abstain from entering into this continuum at all, usually in response to a special call from God or in service to the community. The decision to remain celibate, for whatever reason, was a valid and acceptable alternative to the normal ideal. Homosexuality, however, was necessarily excluded and unacceptable because these relationships were essentially unable to be complete and whole. The inability of homosexual relationships ever to be directly procreative invalidated them in principle from conforming to the ideal. This realization implied that any form of homosexual sexual activity was wrong, and could not be condoned in principle.¹⁷

The fact that a significant proportion of any given population is essentially unable ever to participate in this normative ideal of human life does not completely invalidate it, but does raise the question as to whether this ideal is fully adequate to deal with all human beings. Is the significant percentage of people who are not heterosexual, and so cannot ever enter into the spectrum of sexuality and human relationships as outlined above, to be fully excluded from all forms of sexuality and relationship throughout their lives? Can an ideal predicated solely on heterosexual experience fully apply to people who are unable, through no fault of their own, to share in this experience?

It is increasingly clear that the traditional paradigm cannot reply adequately to questions raised by the phenomenon of homosexuality. Without negating the tradition, it does seem necessary to admit that the tradition simply cannot apply in all cases. While the traditional understanding of 'wholistic' sexuality may still be applicable to the great majority of heterosexual men and women, it would have to be modified to address the issues that pertain to homosexual persons. In all cases, it is not valid to challenge and condemn any person for not living up to an ideal that they are existentially excluded from ever achieving.

It is clear, therefore, that while accepting a new understanding of homosexuality will not totally overturn the traditional teaching on sexuality, it will entail a renewal and rearticulation of the most profound insights of the tradition. The presence of new data (in this case homosexuality), will affect the ongoing process of communal inquiry

and moral discernment and may ultimately lead to new and deeper understanding of reality. This process is not to be feared and resisted, but should be welcomed and explored as an essential dimension of seeking to know the truth.

Some Pastoral Conclusions

Homosexuality itself is not the primary problem which confronts the Roman Catholic tradition. Homosexuals are also certainly not the problem. The real problem is twofold: How can the tradition be reinterpreted and reformulated so as to account for a new understanding of human sexuality and particularly the reality of a genuinely homosexual orientation? And, how should the Christian community respond to the profound injustice experienced by gay and lesbian persons, especially in the light of the Church's complicity in this injustice?

In regard to the first problem it is clear that any systematic response must begin by conceiving of the tradition as a living and developing communal process of inquiry and discernment. This process does not repudiate the past, but emerges from it and in continuity with it. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that the general consensus about the reality of a unique homosexual orientation that is a constitutive part of some personalities represents decidedly new data that have not previously been accounted for in the tradition. If these new data are taken seriously, it may become increasingly clear that homosexuality and homosexuals cannot simply be assimilated and judged under the existing model of wholistic sexuality and human relationships. While it may be possible to maintain the normative claims about the value of chaste, loving, and committed relationships that underlie the current model of sexuality, ultimately a new understanding of human relationships is needed to account for the experience of homosexual persons. This new understanding would similarly emphasize the wholistic continuum of sexuality, and the need for all relationships to be generative and dedicated to serving the community, but would need to be modified to account for the unique experience of homosexual men and women, who are unable to be procreative in the strict sense.

To the second problem, the only adequate response on behalf of the Christian community is a clear and unequivocal rejection of and resistance to all the forms of civil and social injustice that confront gay and lesbian persons. Homosexuals should be included in the category of those victimized and oppressed by the social structures of sin in any given culture. The Church should acknowledge its own collusion in this oppression and resolve first to cleanse itself of all hatred, fear and self-

righteousness directed toward homosexuals. It should likewise call individuals and communities to repentance who have collaborated in the exclusion and dehumanization of gays and lesbians. Only by recognizing that the issue of homosexuality is first of all a matter of social justice, and only secondarily a question of sexual morality, can the Church be true to the witness of Jesus Christ, who welcomed all people to his table but gave particular attention to those forced to the margins of society.

Homosexuals are not “problems” and should not be treated as such by either the Church or the wider society. The basic human dignity of persons with a homosexual orientation is neither diminished nor tarnished and their human rights deriving from this dignity can never be infringed, curtailed or denied. The God-given sexual orientation of homosexual persons challenges the whole Christian community to expand our understanding of human sexuality; the Roman Catholic tradition gives us the breadth to be able to achieve that expansion.

- 1 *The Souls of Black Folk*. (New York 1989) p. 1–2.f
- 2 Some would argue that distinctions of race cannot be equated with distinctions of sexual orientation, insisting that the color of one’s skin is truly “accidental”, while sexual activity is “essential” to one’s humanity. As such sexual orientation falls under normative ethical categories, and can be judged as right or wrong in a way that race or ethnic origin cannot. Nevertheless, I would maintain that the experience of oppression and violence is similar and related, regardless of how one rationalizes or justifies this oppression. The fact remains that some persons are outcast, alienated and discriminated against by the dominant culture because one constitutive part of their personhood does not meet the expectations of the dominant culture.
- 3 I generally will be using the terms homosexuality and homosexuals as well as the terms gay and gays and lesbians, because “homosexuality” is the language used in the documents and in most of the theoretical discourse. While I appreciate many gays’ insistence on using alternative language, I think that homosexual is an inclusive term for both men and women and is most precise in the context of this discussion.
- 4 See further: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II 90–94; Porter, Jean. *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics*. (Louisville, especially pp. 34–100, 172–180. Richard Gula, *What Are They Saying About Moral Norms?*. (New York: 1981), pp. 34–53.
- 5 James Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*. (Oxford: 1987).
- 6 This epistemology and criterion for truth is most clearly developed in the Pragmatic tradition in North American thought and is articulated most fully in the work of C.S. Peirce. See further, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. (Cambridge: 1931). Vol. 5.1–212; 5.358–410.
- 7 For a thorough historical treatment of homosexuality and homosexuals in the West see, John Boswell. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. (Chicago: 1980), pp. 3–60, and particularly notice p. 9, footnote number 9. Also see , L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New*

- Testament and Their Implications For Today*. (Philadelphia: 1988) pp.118–119.
- 8 Countryman. *Ibid.* pp.110–123, and 30–32, 60–64. John McNeill. *The Church and the Homosexual*. (Kansas City: 1976) pp. 37–107.
 - 9 The foundations and implications of this distinction are still being fiercely debated, particularly between the essentialist and social constructionist models of sexual identity, and/or the minoritizing and universalizing schools of thought. For a thorough treatment see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*. (Berkeley: 1990), pp. 1–90.
 - 10 Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Concerning Certain Questions in Sexual Ethics*. 1975. *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*. 1986.
 - 11 Gareth Moore, O.P., in his article, “Are Homosexuals Sick?” (*New Blackfriars*, Vol. 70, No. 823, 15–19) points out that the basic Vatican position that homosexuality is a “condition” is neither a development nor improvement over previously held positions. By referring to homosexuality in “quasi-medical” terminology they are still implying that homosexuality is somehow a “sickness” or “disease” that afflicts people. While this calls for a more pastoral and sympathetic approach to homosexual persons, it still stigmatizes and denigrates them as somehow inferior and defective, now not in a moral, but in an anthropological sense. Moore points out that this is both irrational (homosexuality does not have any of the qualities of what we would normally call a sickness or disease), and contrary to the tradition that only referred to homosexuality in a moral sense.
 - 12 This is not to deny the reality of genuine bi-sexuality; but it seems to me that bisexuality raises a separate set of issues which may qualify, but not substantially challenge, the point that I am trying to make. I have chosen to limit this discussion therefore, to two basic types of sexual orientation.
 - 13 While it may be true that some of the reaction against homosexual persons has been a reaction to homosexual acts which are thought to be detrimental to the common good, in other words, that there is an ethical rather than just prejudicial (i.e. irrational) basis for this oppression, this can in no way explain or justify the type of exclusion and violence perpetrated against homosexual persons in the popular culture. Other sexual acts that violate ethical injunctions (masturbation or adultery for instance), do not have the same stigma attached, and do not justify the oppression of persons who perform these acts. (To my knowledge there are no Western cultures that systematically discriminate against masturbators, or even adulterers, although both would be clearly wrong given most forms of moral reasoning in regard to sexuality.)
 - 14 I am referring here basically to the “hermeneutic of suspicion” and “hermeneutic of recovery” that have become common in feminist thought, and the hermeneutic of “preferential option for the poor” or the “theological-liberative” hermeneutic employed by Leonardo Boff and other Latin American liberation theologians.
 - 15 For the most profound articulation of the Roman Catholic understanding of sexuality and relationships see, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium Et Spes)*, part II, chapter I.
 - 16 See: Pope Paul VI. *Humanae Vitae*. (New York) 1968). *Declaration Concerning Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics. The Code of Canon Law*. (Canon Law Society of America, 1983). Canons 1055 — 1057.
 - 17 “To choose someone of the same sex for one’s sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals of the Creator’s sexual design. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union, *able to transmit life*; and so it thwarts the call to a life of that form of self-giving which the gospel says is the *essence of Christian living*.” (emphasis mine) *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*. (#7).