

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE FAMILY

by Edward M. Levine

For nearly two decades, homosexuals and their sympathizers have increased their efforts to persuade opinion leaders, educators, clergy, government officials, and the public that their sexual lives, though different, are as normal and natural as the heterosexuals'. Since some heterosexuals also engage in sodomy, the homosexuals have claimed that it is only their same-sex orientation that sets them apart from heterosexuals. Regarding this as inconsequential, homosexuals go on to insist that a pluralist society should extend them minority group acceptance and status. In sum, they call for full social approval of their sexual identity and behavior.

Many of those who are familiar with these views consider it a mark of enlightenment and civility to accept them *prima facie*. They do so largely because homosexuals have led them to believe that homosexuality is an "orientation" or "preference" (choice) and is, therefore, as legitimate as any other.

It is well-known, however, that boys of elementary and high school age who are incipient homosexuals are typically subjected to the punishing taunts, derision, and ridicule of their peers. Both common sense and sociological role theory suggest that the desire of such youngsters (and adults) to avoid the rejection and enjoy the acceptance of their peers would alone induce them to spurn homosexuality, if it were really a matter of sexual preference.

In an unusually informative 1972 article little known outside the psychiatric community, Warren Gadda synthesized empirical studies of physiologists whose findings unequivocally show that human heterosexuality is established, in biologically normal individuals (including homosexuals), between the sixth and 12th weeks of fetal life. Hence, all biologically normal males and females are heterosexual at birth.

Other well-established evidence furnished by Bieber, Socarides, Stoller, Ovesey, *et al.* indicates that homosexuality results from an overpowering unconscious fear of heterosexuality, generally caused by a domineering mother and a passive-submissive, emotionally absent father (or the other way around).

The significance of these findings is that homosexuality is a psychopathological symptom that can be (and has been) cured in therapy — providing the individual wants to change (which most homosexuals do not). Even more important is that homosexuality can be prevented by parenting that fosters children's innate bio-psychological heterosexuality.

Yet, the thrust of the homosexual movement is to deny that homosexuality is psychopathological, that heterosexuality alone is healthy, and that sound parenting is essential to heterosexual gender-identity in adulthood. The logic of homosexuals' claim to normality leads them to reject the importance of marriage and family, of competent

child-rearing, and of the moral values that serve as their foundation.

In 1973, yielding to great pressure from homosexual organizations and ideologues, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) initiated the change in its official diagnosis of homosexuality as psychopathology. The new policy declared homosexuality psychopathological only for those individuals who sought psychiatric treatment for it. The APA's policy change was followed, two years later, by the American Psychological Association. Both official views are still held up by homosexuals as definitive proof that homosexuality is psychologically and otherwise as healthy as heterosexuality.

These diagnostic redefinitions of homosexuality by leading professional associations have had an adverse impact that extends far beyond the views of therapists, homosexuals, and sexologists. Parents, for example, may be confused about how to rear their children if their values and intuition conflict with the official conclusions of the new priesthood. And their uncertainty will be sensed by their offspring who need parental support for their developing masculinity and femininity.

Parents who are indifferent about their children's gender-identity may very well place them at risk of becoming homosexuals, bisexuals, or transsexuals. Rather than admiring and reinforcing their sons' and daughters' sexual differences, some parents studiously adhere to the social fiction of androgyny as a biological fact. For their children, serious heterosexual dysfunctions are possible outcomes of being raised according to this contemporary mythology.

While a good deal has been written about the homosexu-



Edward M. Levine is professor of sociology at Loyola University.

als' sexual behavior that sets them apart from society, homosexuals rarely discuss this publicly. Their desire for respectability masks their obsession with sexual gratification as such, regardless of the degradation of both their and their sex partners' individuality. By their own accounts, they endlessly engage in furtive, promiscuous, and impersonal sex with utter strangers in public men's rooms, parks, bathhouses, and elsewhere. Some have reported having as many as 10 different sex partners during an evening, and in 1978 Bell and Weinberg found that 43 percent of the homosexuals in their study had more than 500 different sex partners in a lifetime.

As for homosexual couples, it is well-known and acknowledged among them that infidelity is their norm. Peter Fisher (1978) has candidly written that homosexual "love" is no longer expected to hinge on fidelity. As we are now aware, it is their sexual promiscuity that is largely responsible for the high rate of venereal and other diseases among homosexuals, as well as for the AIDS epidemic that has struck them and, through bisexuals, threatens the rest of us.

In the name of their right to indulge themselves in depersonalized sex, homosexuals have mounted a strong attack on the family as an indispensable institution. In 1971, for example, Dennis Altman, a leading and articulate homosexual spokesman, envisaged sexual liberation as putting an end to monogamy and "the nuclear family as the central organizing principle of society." Altman believes in communal child-rearing that would involve nonparent adults, including homosexuals. Such arrangements, he argues, are the only effective ways of breaking down the sex-role stereotypes into which the nuclear family "tends to force us."

Homosexuals now openly devalue marriage and family, proper child-rearing, and heterosexuality by insisting that they, too, are entitled to marry, retain custody of their children after divorce, and to adopt children. A few clergymen and more than a few judges accord them these rights—the clergy believing in the religious entitlement to marriage, the judges either out of fear or because they do not know of persuasive grounds for denying them child custody.

While most homosexuals apparently have not married, numbers of them have been married as bisexuals and had children. Bell and Weinberg (1978) reported that almost 20 percent of the male homosexuals and one third of the female homosexuals in their study had been married, some hoping that marriage would somehow cure them of their vice. Those who yield to it ordinarily divorce their spouses, causing tremendous shock and loss.

Their children, for example, somehow try to adjust to a custodial mother who dates women and may have a live-in lesbian lover. Others must visit a homosexual father who has left them and their mother for another man. All such youngsters are unreasonably expected to understand and approve the meaning and implications of a parent's homosexuality. Yet this surely eludes the grasp of younger children, and is by no means well-understood by adolescents—or necessarily accepted by any of them. Indeed, a parent announcing his homosexuality can weaken or badly confuse children's sense of their own gender identity—"will this happen to me?"

The total population of homosexuals is unknown and can only be estimated. If the most commonly mentioned percentage of male and female homosexuals in the population—2 percent (the figure ranges up to 10 percent)—is used, and if the most frequently cited ratio of homosexuality between the sexes (four males to one female) is also accepted, then there are approximately 748,000 male and female homosexuals in the population of unmarried individuals (37.4 million) from age 18 to 64. Of these, slightly more than 598,000 are males and 149,000 are females. Since the latter cancel out the same number of the former, there are about 449,000 male homosexuals who deplete the ranks of marriageable men. Therefore, there are 449,000 marriageable women who will remain single so long as their and the male homosexual populations remain constant.

If the homosexual population is estimated at 3 percent, its total is slightly over 1.22 million, of which almost 890,000 are male and about 220,000 are female. Canceling out the females with an equal number of males results in the balance of nearly 667,000 male homosexuals—the same number of heterosexual females who will, because of this depletion of the population of marriageable males, remain unmarried. Whichever figure is used, a huge number of women are deprived of the opportunity to lead satisfying lives within marriage and family.

Numbers of homosexuals remain religiously observant, and a few Christian and Jewish religious institutions welcome them either by holding special services or establishing special houses of worship for them, or by accepting them into their congregations. Nevertheless, the homosexuals' drive to win moral legitimacy must attempt to render both arbitrary and unjust the religious values underpinning the worthiness of marriage, family, and child-rearing.

Homosexual writers for some time have been critical of Judaism and Christianity because of what C.A. Tripp termed their "reactionary, anti-sexual" moral values. And Dennis Altman complained that "sex has been firmly linked, and nowhere more firmly than in Christian theology, with the institution of the family and with child-bearing. Sex is thus legitimized for its utilitarian principles, rather than as an end in itself, and marriage becomes a 'sacred partnership' entered into for the begetting of children. Even where sexual pleasure is accepted as a complementary goal, the connection between marriage and sex remains." Outraged by the religious support given to marriage and family at the expense of mere sexuality, homosexual writers argued for recognizing the "bisexual needs of human beings," and they bemoan the fact that Greek paganism, with its more open-minded view of homosexuality, was ever supplanted by Christianity and Judaism.

The kind of polymorphous sexuality to which he refers is truly typical only of very young children (who outgrow it). As far as scientific evidence goes, human beings have neither polymorphous nor bisexual needs. Yet, nothing seems to deter homosexuals from arguing as they wish to convince society that their goal of attaining moral approbation for perversion is a just one. This has been made all the easier for them with the waning influence of religion in an age when unbridled relativism and a narcissistic individualism have become the reigning standards.



In Praise of Toughness by Michael Levin

"A system-grinder hates the truth."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Failure of Feminism by
Nicholas Davidson, New York:
Prometheus; 329 pp.; \$24.95.

During the 25 years of its existence, contemporary feminism has received a measure of gentle chiding for its excesses. Not even the most indulgent eye can completely overlook feminist comparisons of marriage to prostitution, childbirth to defecation, or the use of the pronoun "he" to Jim Crow. Yet few cultural critics have been willing to call feminism nonsense from top to bottom, misanthropic utopianism at its core as well as its periphery. To that small group add Nicholas Davidson.

Davidson gauges the "failure" of feminism along several dimensions, faulting it first as an explanatory theory. As he lucidly and accurately explains, feminism takes all of society to be the product of women's oppression. (The popular label for feminism was initially "women's lib," a clear expression of the demand for relief from male dominance.) This theory in turn obliges feminists to deny, as they do, any basic biological difference between the inclinations and aptitudes of the two sexes. This tenet is crucial. If the sexes occupy different social "roles" because, on the whole, they want to, these "roles" reflect the cumulative authentic choices of both men and women, not deception and coercion. Indeed, if sex differences are real, maintenance of a society without sex roles would require intrusive manipulation on a scale, in Davidson's words, "to make such totalitarian nightmares as *Brave New World* and 1984

look tolerant and humane by comparison."

Davidson's synopsis of the scientific literature, although derivative from previous surveys, suffices to refute what he aptly terms "cultural determinism." Prenatal exposure of the male brain to androgens is what produces the characteristic behavior of human males; genetic females accidentally exposed to androgens in utero also come to display "male" behavior. (Davidson does not mention complementary studies by Karow and Reinisch of androgen-insensitive fetal males who go on to display characteristically feminine behavior.) Also, as Davidson notes, ethology has disman-

tled the false dichotomy between learned behavior and innate reflexes; the innateness of general patterns of motivation and cognition is now a commonplace among evolutionary biologists.

Davidson blunts his argument a bit by straining to credit "feminist scientists" like Sarah Hrdy and Carol Gilligan with a degree of insight into male biases in science. Prof. Hrdy, for instance, accuses classical Darwinism of one-sidedly taking male adaptation alone as the engine of human evolution. This silly accusation, which Davidson accepts, simply illustrates the alertness of feminists to nonexistent slights. *Darwin himself* emphasized the interplay between male and female preferences for traits in the opposite sex as a determinant of evolution, an idea central to Fisher's work a generation



Michael Levin is author of *Feminism and Freedom* (Transaction Books) and professor of philosophy at City College, New York.