

**Zeitschrift:** Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle  
**Band:** 22 (1954)  
**Heft:** 8

**Artikel:** A delicate problem  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-570036>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 28.03.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

should imagine, for instance, that the undergraduate class might yield a fairly high percentage of individuals eager for treatment, always supposing such treatment to be possible, and permanent. Impermanent treatment would be worse than none.

3. Meanwhile, how comes it that the often decorative counterpart of the male homosexual is not included in the ban? Is there any difference in the degree of delinquency involved? None whatever. This looks like a legal anomaly. Sauce for the gander should be sauce for the goose.

4. The heterosexual and the blissfully contented monosexual may take care of themselves; in prescribing for the homosexual a little sanity would not be out of place. And the first step towards sanity is to take over the more reasonable provisions of the Napoleonic Code. If English divorce laws are a disreputable tangle, our enactments on this head are a sinister joke, the source of multiple and unmerited suffering (other correspondents also emphasised this fact.) What calls for treatment is not so much homosexuality as the diseased attitude adopted towards it in non-Latin countries. This attitude is the outcome of Judaeo-Christian teaching, as interpreted by Puritanism.

## A Delicate Problem

But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you brethren, do not so wickedly . . .

Genesis 19:47.

The problem of the homosexual is almost as old as human society. Through history it has been met, or parried, in varying ways. The pagan Greek society in which Plato and Sappho lived regarded homosexual love as an established, honored relationship; while the Christian British society in which Oscar Wilde lived regarded it as a heinous crime. In Wilde's case the punishment was a prison sentence.

Modern society, which sets a premium on free discussion, has tended to meet the problem of the homosexual with considerable frankness. (As a girl sophomore in a leading Eastern coeducational college put it last week: «Of course we have a lot of sex deviants here. They must go somewhere for an education. Here we are sympathetic.») Although homosexual relations between males (sodomy) constitute a criminal offense in 46 of the states, as well as in Great Britain, psychiatric authorities, from Freud down to the present, have argued that the homosexual, although he cannot necessarily be cured, is probably a homosexual through no fault of his own. In his report, Dr. Kinsey estimated that at least 50 per cent of the male population experiences some overt homo-

sexual experience between adolescence and old age. Female activity (Lesbianism) is far less common—Kinsey found that only 28 per cent of American women interviewed had had this experience. But some authorities have estimated that there are at least 500,000 men and women inverts in New York City alone.

*Accusations:* In the United States, the growing problem of homosexuality has been aired, in a sophisticated way, in such Broadway plays as «The Children's Hour,» «Tea and Sympathy,» and «The Immoralist,» the story of the life of André Gide. On a less artistic level, it has been discussed by such publications as a California pocket-size magazine called «One,» which subtitles itself «The Homosexual Magazine» and leans to an unabashed treatment of its subject.

In London, during the last fortnight, six months after the shocking charges against two prominent Englishmen, Sir John Gielgud, the actor, and Lord Montagu of Beaulieu (Newsweek, Nov. 16, 1953), the House of Lords has been conducting an official inquiry into the subject of homosexuality. On the whole the peers took the traditional Christian view, as given in Genesis, toward «the filthy, disgusting, and unnatural vice of homosexuality.» «Some people,» said Lord Winterton, «contended that just because of an irresistible urge, some men just could not help being homosexual. The theory was based on Freudian ideas that had done immense harm to the modern world and were largely antagonistic to Christian doctrine. The irresistible urge was being carried to dangerous lengths by the advocates of penal reform. The real remedy for the increase of this horrible vice was a greater awareness of evil, and greater condemnation by public opinion of those who practiced it.»

Lord Ammon, among others, added his corroboration. In his youth, he said, «they called such things sin; now they call them complexes.»

*Cause and Cure:* Psychiatrists differ sharply with the lords. From their corner one of the latest developments in this important research has just been discussed in a wise and enlightening booklet, «The Problem of Homosexuality,» by Dr. Karl M. Bowman, psychiatrist of the University of California Medical School, and superintendent of the Langley Porter Clinic in San Francisco, and Bernice Engle, research assistant in sexual deviation. The Bowman-Engle study appeared in the Journal of Social Hygiene. Reprints have been made available through the American Social Hygiene Association, New York.

Homosexuals as a group are unhappy and discontented, but most of them control their social conduct within the same bounds as do people of normal sexual inclinations. Fear is the basic mechanism that sends the homosexual to psychiatrists for help. There is the fear of being caught, of being noticeably different, plus a growing fear, sometimes mounting to a depression, that unlike other people they will never be happily married and the parents of children.

*Father's Fault:* Many experienced psychiatrists and psychoanalysts believe that homosexuality is no offense unless young children are molested, or violence or public indecencies are involved. Most of these authorities doubt that psychiatric treatment can influence the homosexual habit, but it may help the patient to better adjustment.

Psychological views vary as to why people are homosexuals. But the one most generally accepted is that male homosexuality stems from a fixation during early childhood (9 years is the average age for the first contact), and is aggravated if the boy has a weak father (or none) in his upbringing, «A father,» Bowman and Engle say, «should take an important part in training his son and in restraining his instinctual drives. The mother should offer warm care and affection. The boy thus has a man to identify with, and a beloved mother-figure to possess as an ideal.»

Other doctors argue that American methods of child rearing and the question of coeducational training may directly encourage the formation of a homosexual pattern. Some parents and teachers, fearing that boys and girls will get into trouble if they see too much of each other, provide only limited chances for the youngsters to make contact with the opposite sex. Many inherently shy boys and girls find it easier to establish friendships with their own sex, and their homosexuality may be a direct outcome of their own social inadequacies. If homosexual patterns are to be avoided, Drs Bowman and Engle warn, boys and girls must be encouraged to mix with each other and to form early attachments, but sexual interests should not be stimulated before adolescence.

*Harmonic Discontent:* Generally speaking, all psychiatrists agree that the tendency to homosexuality is not inherited; some of them doubt that it is caused by glandular imbalance. At the Langley Porter Clinic, Dr. Bowman and his staff are now conducting a large-scale research program on the endocrine status of the homosexual. To find out whether there is any correlation between glandular or other biochemical imbalances and emotional and mental factors, the California psychiatrists are examining certain steroid sex hormones and anti-enzymes in the urine and blood of homosexuals committed to two state hospitals near Los Angeles. Results, as yet unreported, may point more conclusively to physical, and possibly treatable causes of sex deviations. For the possibility of treatment has not been given up. Thus, if the psychiatrists' view of the physical basis of homosexuality can be proved, some of the wicked men of Sodom might have been saved, after all.

Newsweek, Paris, June 14th, 1954.

## The Boy from the Navy

His name is David. He is in the Merchant Navy, twenty years old and the only son of his parents. That's all I know about him. His mother told me this when she was sitting for a few minutes at my own bedside. The boy occupies the bed next to my own. He is still unable to talk much; so, having no visitors of my own, his mother talked to me. I said to her, «that's a nice boy you've got there.» «Yes», she answered, «he's a lovely lad.» Maternal pride shone in her eyes.

We're both, David and myself, in an English hospital. But I may be sent home tomorrow; my grumbling appendix has quietened down, mainly thanks to a diet of near-starvation.