

# Homosexuality and Ageless Wisdom Teachings

## Bridging to Right Human Relations

Dorothy I. Riddle<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

One of the sources of cleavage to be addressed by the esoteric community in working towards right human relations is the homophobia towards, and stigmatization of, homosexuals.<sup>2</sup> This article explores the issue and provides a detailing of the changes necessary to heal this source of cleavage.

### Introduction

It is clear from metaphysical teachings that we have a responsibility to work towards human dignity, inclusiveness, and respect for all members of the human family. The Ageless Wisdom, as reported by the Tibetan, defines this as “right human relations.” In fact, right human relations “is not simply goodwill, as people seem to think; it is a product or result of goodwill and the instigator of constructive changes between individuals, communities, and nations.”<sup>3</sup>

“One interesting aspect of goodwill is that, as it develops in the human consciousness, it first of all brings a revelation of the existent cleavages that distinguish the political, the religious, the social, and the economic life of people everywhere. The revelation of a cleavage is ever accompanied (for such is the beauty of the human spirit) by efforts along all possible lines to bridge or heal the cleavage. This is testified to by the thousands of groups and organizations working to end cleavages and to pull down the barriers to right human relationships.”<sup>4</sup>

So it is our job, as part of our expression of goodwill, to recognize and heal cleavages. The Ageless Wisdom underscores that “human beings themselves must ... destroy the prejudices, the animosities, and the fixed ideas that have prevented synthesis, that have created cleavages and hindered right understanding.”<sup>5</sup>

One such cleavage results from the consistent stigmatization, both in metaphysical writings and in human communities, of persons who are viewed as homosexual. Around the world, hate crimes against gays abound. Gays and lesbians are often banned from certain occupational roles such as teaching, religious ministry, and serving openly in the military service. Gay and lesbian adolescents may be taunted and humiliated at school, and child custody may be withheld on the grounds of sexual orientation.

In the United States, the American Psychiatric Association became so concerned about the degree of violence associated with the stigma against homosexuality that, in December 1992, it issued the following statement: “Whereas homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities, the American Psychiatric Association calls on all international health organizations and individual psychiatrists in other countries to urge the repeal in their own country of legislation that penalizes homosexual acts by consenting adults in private. And further the APA calls on these organizations and individuals to do all that is possible to decrease the stigma related to homosexuality wherever and whenever it may occur.”<sup>6</sup>

So we have calls from spiritual teachings to become inclusive and heal cleavages, and we have calls from civil society to do likewise. How, then, can we move forward as esotericists?

### Attitudes Towards Homosexuality

In the late nineteenth century and through most of the twentieth century, sexual relations between two consenting adults of the same sex were illegal and considered unnatural. Homosexuality was

viewed as lustful, depraved, bestial behavior, engaged in for the purpose of physical pleasure rather than procreation. Even though the vast majority of heterosexual sexual behavior was not focused on procreation either, one could maintain the illusion that it might be. There might have been a time in human history when rampant procreation was critical to the survival of the human race; however, that is certainly not the case in this age of over-population. And reproductive technologies, such as artificial insemination and surrogate wombs, have made it possible for same-sex couples to become parents. So the context for the original objections has shifted. As well, scholarly analyses of religious texts purported to be anti-homosexual are demonstrating that homophobic persons cannot necessarily look to scriptures for support.<sup>7</sup>

In 1973, based on a review of the scientific literature and consultation with experts in the field, the American Psychiatric Association's Board of Trustees removed homosexuality from its official diagnostic manual, *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Second Edition (DSM II)*. The public announcement stated that experts had found that homosexuality did not meet the criteria to be considered a mental illness. In May 1990, the World Health Organization followed suit by removing homosexuality from its official International Classification of Diseases (ICD).<sup>8</sup>

The process of decriminalization of adult homosexuality, while began in the 1800s, is still in progress, with India's decriminalization in 2009 being one of the most recent. Despite opposition from the U.S. Bush administration, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Organization of Islamic Conferences, France gained the support of 66 countries in December 2008 for a UN Declaration on Decriminalization of Homosexuality. The nonbinding declaration "condemned human rights violations based on homophobia, saying such measures run counter to the universal declaration of human rights. 'How can we tolerate the fact that people are stoned, hanged, decapitated and tortured only because of their sexual orientation?' said Rama Yade, the French state secretary for human rights, noting that homosexuality is banned in nearly 80 countries and subject to the death penalty in at least six."<sup>9</sup>

As of the summer of 2010, ten countries now legally recognize the marriage of same-sex couples: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden. Another twenty countries recognize the civil unions or registered common-law partnerships of same-sex couples, as do sub-federal jurisdictions in a number of countries.

In parallel, public and professional recognition of sexual orientation as a continuum rather than a duality (heterosexual/homosexual) has grown. Despite this evolution of consciousness within civil society, the stigma remains within the esoteric community, reinforced in part by outdated commentary.

## **The Nature of Sexual Orientation**

Homosexuality itself is commonly misinterpreted as referring exclusively to sexual relations with a person of the same sex. In actuality, that is only a small component of the meaning of homosexuality. A more accurate term for our discussion is "sexual orientation," which is a relational term and describes the relationships we choose with others.<sup>10</sup> The table below lists some of the components of sexual orientation, from which we can see that the concept of sexual orientation is much more complex than commonly described.

If we examine ourselves and those we know well, we will soon see that many people would not always select the same relational focus. One could be heterosexual without being actively sexual with a person of the opposite gender, or homosexual while being sexually celibate. A "manly" heterosexual man may bond with and model other men even though his sexual focus is on women. Similarly, there are lesbians who are very woman-identified and yet bond socially with men quite easily and frequently.

It is interesting that, in public debates around sexual orientation, critics often raise the specter of homosexuals as pedophiles – though there is no scientific evidence to support that accusation. How-

ever, virtually never is the rampant sexual violence by heterosexual men against women mentioned as a reason to question heterosexuality as a healthy lifestyle.

**Sample Components of Sexual Orientation**

Components	Primary Relational Focus			
	Females	Males	Both Genders	No One
Choose as a behavioral role model				
Bond socially with				
Share emotionally with				
Develop emotional intimacy with				
Have romantic fantasies about				
Have a romantic relationship with				
Have sexual fantasies about				
Have a sexual attraction to				
Have sexual activity with				
Have a sexual relationship with				
Become life partners with				

The relational component of sexual orientation is particularly relevant to our discussion of right human relations. As the Ageless Wisdom tells us, “The theme of the living consciousness of the Planetary Logos is forever and unchangeably the great Hierarchy of Being, that chain of life in which the smallest link is of importance....The major keynote of every single planetary initiation, even to the very highest is RELATIONSHIP.”<sup>11</sup>

**Implications for Right Human Relations**

Prejudice against homosexuals is separative and contrary to our underlying unity as part of the One Life. The importance of inclusivity is emphasized repeatedly in the teachings: “To hate, to be separate, to be exclusive will come to be regarded as the only sin,”<sup>12</sup> says the Tibetan. How then do we overcome the separativeness engendered by homophobia?

Change is not possible until we become aware of our current homophobia and its ramifications. “The first step is the wholesome recognition that cleavages exist.... Each person, community, and nation should begin with a diagnosis of their own attitude[s] ... and then set an example by eliminating cleavages.”<sup>13</sup> We need to remember that only when the lines of cleavage are very apparent, so that the issues are clear, are we then able to heal and build bridges.<sup>14</sup> To help bring about this clarity, there is a group charged with “the task of defining the old truths so that the mind of the race will be clarified, that nonessentials and essentials will be recognized for what they are, and fundamental ideas so contrasted with the formulation of dogmas that that which is basic will be seen and the secondary and unimportant beliefs therefore rejected.”<sup>15</sup> In dealing with this group (who may seem so misguided), we will need to strengthen our ability to forgive so that we express not magnanimity, but rather a recognition of common humanity.<sup>16</sup>

Healing separativeness requires three types of change: mental, emotional, and behavioral. Looking first at *mental* change, we have already explored the need to shift from a simplistic equation of homo-

sexuality with sex to the more complex notion of sexual orientation. Moving away from “heteronormative”<sup>17</sup> language and imagery is another shift that is needed.

*Emotional* change involves substituting goodwill and compassion for the repugnance and fear homophobic persons feel towards homosexuals. “Goodwill is contagious; once a definite start has been made in a pure and disinterested spirit, goodwill will permeate the world and right human relations will be rapidly established.”<sup>18</sup> Goodwill is the dynamic that brings with it a longing for harmony and cooperation, a wish to free ourselves from a spirit of hatred and revenge. People become tired of hatred and fighting – there is a kind of fatigue factor.

*Behavioral* change involves responding with concrete action to the call of the American Psychiatric Association to decrease prejudice and violence against homosexuals. Similarly, the American Psychological Association has stated that “the people who have the most positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbians are those who say they know one or more gay person well. For this reason, psychologists believe negative attitudes toward gays as a group are prejudices that are not grounded in actual experience with lesbians or gay men but on stereotypes and prejudice.”<sup>19</sup> The Tibetan has pointed out to us that “most [of our] goodwill, desire, prayer and invocation becomes ‘frozen’ [on the mental plane]” and that instead it needs to become “active in expression and *in tangible deed* upon the physical plane.”<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Right human relations calls us to appreciate the rich diversity of the human family within a context of basic unity. “The establishing of right human relations is an aspect of the divine will for humanity and the next facet of the divine expression to manifest itself in human affairs – individual, communal, national, and international. Nothing has ever finally impeded this divine expression, except the *time* factor, and that time factor is *determined by humanity* and is an expression of divine free will.”<sup>21</sup>

Homosexuality challenges us to appreciate wholeness without having to posit the duality of gender. We know that “the ‘door where evil dwells’ is kept open by humanity through its ... hatreds and its separateness.” As our expression of goodwill grows, this door closes through the “sheer weight of public opinion.”<sup>22</sup>

To bring about right human relations, we must take active initiative and be willing to heal the challenging rift of homophobia. Change on this planet is not the Hierarchy’s job – it is ours. We, Humanity, are the “world savior.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The author served on the original American Psychological Association Task Force on the Status of Lesbian and Gay Male Psychologists, leading its research initiatives. She has also been responsible for the development of the now widely used Riddle Homophobia Scale.

<sup>2</sup> The term “homosexual” is used in this article because that is the term that appears consistently in esoteric literature. More common current nomenclature refers to GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) or GLBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer).

<sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 647.

<sup>4</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 750.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 752.

<sup>6</sup> See “Homosexuality: Position Statement” at <http://www.psych.org/Departments/EDU/Library/APAOfficialDocumentsandRelated/PositionStatements/199216.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> See Jay Michaelson, “Ten Reasons Why Gay Rights Is a Religious Issue,” *Tikkun Magazine*, July/August 2010, [http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/july2010\\_michaelson/print](http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/july2010_michaelson/print); A.L. De Silva, “Homosexuality and Theravada Buddhism,” *BuddhaNet Magazine Articles*, <http://www.buddhanet.net/homosexu.htm>; “Policies of 47 Christian Faith Groups Towards Homosexuality,” [http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom\\_chur2.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_chur2.htm).

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- <sup>8</sup> World Health Organization, *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (Geneva: WHO, 1990), 11.
- <sup>9</sup> See Neil MacFarquhar, "In a First, Gay Rights Are Pressed At the U.N.," *The New York Times*, 18 December 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/world/19nations.html>.
- <sup>10</sup> For more information on sexual orientation, see "Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality" at the American Psychological Association's Help Center, <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>.
- <sup>11</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 737.
- <sup>12</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1948), 112.
- <sup>13</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 751.
- <sup>14</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 744.
- <sup>15</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 328.
- <sup>16</sup> Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 207.
- <sup>17</sup> The term "heteronormative" was coined by Michael Warner to refer to the basic assumption of heterosexuality as the normal sexual behavior for all human beings. See Michael Warner, "Fear of a Queer Planet," *Social Text* (1991), 9(4):3-17.
- <sup>18</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 752.
- <sup>19</sup> American Psychological Association, *Psychology and You: Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality*, [http://fogarty.org/tim/gay\\_issues/apa\\_pamphlet.html](http://fogarty.org/tim/gay_issues/apa_pamphlet.html).
- <sup>20</sup> Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 280.
- <sup>21</sup> Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 113.
- <sup>22</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 173-174.
- <sup>23</sup> Bailey, *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 539.