

Homosexuality and Ageless Wisdom Teachings

Questioning and Re-Interpreting

A Student

Abstract

This article explores the way homosexuality¹ is represented in the Blue Books of Alice A. Bailey, contextualizes certain statements within Ageless Wisdom writings, and offers a Soul-centered interpretation of what love relationships mean—no matter who are involved.

Introduction

Condemnation of homosexuality is unfortunately as common in esoteric teachings as it has been in society at large. The Ageless Wisdom literature is grounded in an awareness of the unity of all beings as part of the One Life and in the central importance of Love and the Will to Good in our solar system. Yet, while legal and psychiatric frameworks increasingly recognize homosexuality as a legitimate and healthy lifestyle choice, esoteric writings have not kept pace.

We know that “the moment there is knowledge and a flash of understanding, that moment a person’s responsibility begins.”² We also know that in Western culture alone

one in five lesbian and gay people have experienced a homophobic hate crime or incident in the last three years. One in eight have been a victim in the last year. Three in four of those experiencing hate crimes or incidents did not report them to the police. One in six lesbian and gay people have been insulted and harassed in the last three years because they are gay. One in eight lesbian and gay people experiencing homophobic hate incidents have experienced unwanted sexual contact as part of the incident. Overall, three in five lesbian and gay people have been a victim of any crime or incident in the last three year.³

In countries like South Africa or Uganda, the rate of violence against homosexuals is much higher. What then is our responsibility as esotericists?

The Responsibility of Students

Within the Ageless Wisdom tradition, each student or aspirant is expected to seek and construct the truth through experience, study, and meditation. Esoteric students are called to question what has been said, to apply knowledge in everyday life, and to exercise the power of the Higher Mind as the ultimate agent of illumination. However, it is all too easy to accept unquestioningly what comes from an authority who is assumed to be a highly evolved spiritual entity. We tend to believe that teachers are infallible in all they say and do. This is regrettable as it overlooks the fact that master teachers are always the first to insist that the ultimate source of knowledge is the Soul or Spirit, not themselves.

The Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti provides an illustration of these admonitions. At a very early age, he was believed to have incarnated as a world teacher. After years of training and discipline within the Theosophical Society, Krishnamurti announced that he was not the Coming One nor would he accept the authority of any Master. He devoted his life to teaching and writing about the dangers of authoritarianism within esoteric circles:

All authority of any kind, especially in the field of thought and understanding, is the most destructive, evil thing. Leaders destroy the followers and followers de-

stroy the leaders. You have to be your own teacher and your own disciple. You have to question everything that man has accepted as valuable, as necessary.⁴

Throughout his prolific career, Krishnamurti taught that the sole source of inspiration, and the only authentic root of freedom, is the human soul:

This is no magnificent deed, because I do not want followers, and I mean this. The moment you follow someone you cease to follow Truth. I am not concerned whether you pay attention to what I say or not. I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages, from all fears, and not to found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies.⁵

We find the same types of reminders in the teachings of the Tibetan, as recorded by Alice Bailey:

The books I have written are sent out with no claim for their acceptance. They may, or may not, be correct, true and useful. It is for you to ascertain their truth by right practice and by the exercise of the intuition....If the teaching conveyed calls forth a response from the illumined mind of the worker in the world, and brings a flashing forth of his intuition, then let that teaching be accepted. But not otherwise. If the statements meet with eventual corroboration, or are deemed true under the test of the Law of Correspondences, then that is well and good. But should this not be so, let not the student accept what is said.⁶

Statements such as these pose for us the challenge of placing teachings in context – in this case, questioning and putting to the test what has been presented regarding the issue of homosexuality. They come to us along with a reminder that we have a critical role to play in helping to shape the Plan through the contribution of our experience. We function most responsibly when we display

the development of a fluidity of mind and attitude that will recognize the fact that – though the Plan stands – techniques, presentations, idealisms, and methods must necessarily change. This is not an easy thing to do....The disciple upon whom the Master can most confidently depend is the one who can – in periods of change – preserve that which is good and fundamental while breaking from the past and add to it that which is of immediate service in the present.⁷

Recognizing Bias

Any writing or teaching needs to be placed in an historical context in order to understand it fully. Alice Bailey, we know, was born into an aristocratic British family of Christian faith. She broke free of many external impositions herself since she married twice, lived in three different countries, supported her family for a time as a factory worker, and became an occult teacher. While she certainly challenged many of the prejudices of her time, her attitude regarding homosexuality remained an uncritical assumption that it was undesirable and a sin.

In writing in the late 1940s about a trip she made with her family to Lake Maggiore in Italy, Bailey contrasts the beauty of the landscape with the *undesirable types of people* found in those lands and describes homosexuality as an unholy performance that could damage her daughters' morality:

As soon as I found the kind of place it was, and that in spite of all its beauty there lurked much evil, I simply sat down and told the girls all about it. I was determined that they should not be so innocent that they would get into danger and I pointed

out the types of people on the roads who were plainly the undesirable kind. I did not dress up the information in beautiful language. I told them baldly and straight just what it was all about, including its degeneracy and its homosexuality, so that they passed unscathed through a great deal that might have damaged them.⁸

This passage both conveys a clear picture of Bailey's attitudes about homosexuality and reveals something of the cultural milieu of her time. Such strong attitudes need to be kept in mind by students when studying the Blue Books not for the purpose of condemning personal values but, what is truly important, for offering an enormous opportunity to exercise critical thinking as readers and students of our own time. We are all always situated at the crossroads of our socio-historical identities and only from a deep understanding of where we are can we truly start to detach and act harmlessly.

When reading the Tibetan's viewpoints on homosexuality, the issue becomes more delicate. On the one hand, those passages seem to equate homosexuality with disease or an excessive sexual focus, or, at its best, with a condition inherited from past systems. On the other hand, we know that the Tibetan was critical of different social, national, racial, and religious groups (criticism that has generated quite a degree of debate). It is possible that this general critical attitude could be strategically aimed at us readers to induce us to question things that seem "too clear."

One never knows with dictated material whether or not the prejudices of the medium influenced the written result. However, it is possible that, since the Tibetan lived when incarnate in a time and place that was also negatively judgmental about homosexuality, passages such as the following may reflect limitations in the Tibetan's synthetic understanding:

One of the major problems today to the psychologist and in a lesser degree to the medical profession, is the growth of homosexuality, both female and male. Specious arguments are brought forth in order to prove that this abnormal development (and the consequent interest in this morbid tendency) is due to the fact that the race is slowly becoming androgynous in its development, and that the future hermaphroditic man or woman is gradually making its appearance. This, again, is *not* true. Homosexuality is what you call a "left-over" from the sexual excesses of Lemurian times, an inherited taint, if you like. Egos who individualized and incarnated in that vast period of time are the ones who today demonstrate homosexual tendencies. In those days, so urgent was the sexual appetite, the normal processes of human intercourse did not satisfy the insatiable desire of the *advanced* individual of the period. Soul force, flowing in through the processes of individualization, served to stimulate the lowest centers. Hence, forbidden methods were practiced. Those who thus practiced them are today, in great numbers, in incarnation, and the ancient habits are too strong for them. They are now far enough advanced upon the evolutionary path so that the cure lies ready at this time—if they choose to employ it. They can, with relative ease, transfer the sex impulse to the throat center, and thus become creative in the higher sense, employing the energy sensed and circulating in right and constructive ways.⁹

Sex is essentially an expression of duality, and of the separation of a unity into two aspects or halves. These we can call spirit and matter, male and female, positive and negative; and they are in the nature of a stage upon the evolutionary ladder towards a final unity or homo-sexuality which has no relation to that perversion that is, today and inaccurately, called "homosexuality."¹⁰

There is much evidence today that would challenge these statements. Certainly, homosexuality is now acknowledged in academic circles as not being a disease. In the 1970s, both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association acknowledged that homo-

sexuality is not a mental disorder¹¹; and the World Health Organization followed suit in 1990.¹² Finally, while people can choose to identify themselves in any way, they cannot choose who they feel attracted to. As the following quote from the American Psychological Association puts it:

It's important to recognize that there are probably many reasons for a person's sexual orientation, and the reasons may be different for different people... Human beings cannot choose to be either gay or straight. For most people, sexual orientation emerges in early adolescence without any prior sexual experience. Although we can choose whether to act on our feelings, psychologists do not consider sexual orientation to be a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed... The reality is that homosexuality is not an illness. It does not require treatment and is not changeable.¹³

The acceptability of many prejudices changes over time, and the discerning esoteric student needs always to keep in mind the prejudices (such as homophobia¹⁴) that dominated at the time that particular esoteric teachings were written and make allowances for them.

The Sexual Component of Homosexuality

While homosexuality primarily represents a lifestyle or orientation, inevitably we must examine the specific issue of sexuality if we are to understand fully the homophobia that permeates esoteric writings. Exploring the issue of sex is difficult in the Ageless Wisdom literature in part because the word is used to refer to a great number of phenomena, ranging from the Divine act of cosmic creation to the laws that govern the attraction of subatomic particles:

Cosmically speaking, sex is a short word used to express the relation existing (during manifestation) between spirit and matter, and between life and form. It is, in the last analysis, an expression of the Law of Attraction—that basic law which underlies the entire manifestation of life in form, and which is the cause of all phenomenal appearance.¹⁵

Both at a cosmic and at a human level, sex is defined in terms of relationship: sex would be, therefore, the purest and strongest form of attraction, that which brings about union and results in creation.

Sexuality should be, ideally, a field of experience in which deeper and elevating connections are made with another human being, an encounter where individuals come together to explore areas of their selves and of their lives, establishing a rapport that facilitates healing and growing through a new understanding of oneself and somebody else through exercising love, freedom and mutual compassion.

[Love] is that synthetic, inclusive grasp of the life and needs of all beings (I have chosen these two words with intent!) that it is the high prerogative of a divine Son [sic] of God to operate. It negates all that builds barriers, makes criticism, and produces separation. It sees no distinction, even when it appreciates *need*, and it produces in one who loves as a Soul immediate identification with that which is loved.¹⁶

One of our critical learnings is to experience unity – the oneness of spirit and matter – in our daily lives, which forms the basis for conscious cooperation with the Soul while grounded on the material plane. Sexuality provides us with a unique venue for this learning. In opening ourselves to another on an intimate level physically, emotionally, and spiritually, we have the opportunity to relate through the upper chakras with another being and experience that oneness with all life.

The intimacy of sexual exchange also offers us other opportunities for learning and growth. In that moment of intimacy, we step into the field of possibilities that allow us a sense of the Infinite.

If we are truly engaged with another in a psychic as well as a physical exchange, we experience that other at their most vulnerable and have the opportunity to practice harmlessness. Here we see the sharp difference in intentionality underlying white magic and black magic – the difference between “being with” the other, or “dominating” the other for our own ends.

The true purpose of sexuality is to create, both on the physical plane (in the sense of procreation) and on the spiritual plane, beyond what we can create from our own experience. Consciousness grows by synthesis – the merging of diverse experiences to create a unique new awareness formed from intimate responsible sharing. A more serviceable approach comes from understanding that, in the terrain of sex and love, we are dealing with the most human, the most intimate, and the most vulnerable terrains of our lives. It is basically through the practice of love that we break the shell that keeps the I alienated from the Soul and from anybody else. It is through love that we encounter the Other of a relationship, with whom we may create something completely anew. Ultimately, it is through love that we synthesize unity and diversity. To do this, we need to accept the challenge to integrate the threefold meaning of union, of sex:¹⁷

1. Physical plane sex, which expresses through our relationships to other people and which could result in parenthood.
2. The union that creates something new, which stems from the lower energies coming to synthesis with the higher energies. This is creativity in any of its forms.
3. Union with the Soul.

When we reflect on the above summary of esoteric teachings, we see that there is actually nothing that requires that sexual intimacy be between persons of the opposite sex.

Identity and the Law of Love

Ultimately, then, sex from the standpoint of the Ageless Wisdom means more than the physical plane level. It encompasses being at wholeness, it puts into motion the interplay between attraction and repulsion, and it challenges sameness. In relating to others, we stretch the boundaries of our self and reach out. We accept the challenge of becoming one and yet remaining two, as Erich Fromm would have had it. This we call love:

The Law of Love is in reality but the law of the system in demonstration on all the planes. Love was the impelling motive for manifestation, and love it is that keeps all in ordered sequence; ... and love eventually perfects all that is. It is love that builds the forms that cradle temporarily the inner hidden life, and love is the cause of the disruption of those forms, and their utter shattering, so that the life may further progress. Love manifests on each plane as the urge that drives the evolving Monad onwards to its goal, and love is the key to the deva kingdom, and the reason of the blending of the two kingdoms eventually into the divine Hermaphrodite.¹⁸

Another aspect to be considered is the contribution that the Ageless Wisdom teachings can make to current debates, in relation to homosexuality, regarding identity and human nature. Michael Warner¹⁹ has coined the term “heteronormativity” to refer to strict segregationist or divisive norms governing the lives of individuals based on the assumption that heterosexuality is normal sexual behavior for all human beings. Heteronormativity produces a dual gender system (male/female) that mirrors cleavages along gender lines and affirms the existence of a normal, natural sexual orientation (heterosexuality) that contrasts with homosexuality as abnormal. But analyses of heteronormativity usually fail to consider the richness of the spiritual dimension of humanity and human identity.

The Ageless Wisdom tradition, with its complex understanding of the human constitution, brings to light a more complex ethical dimension of human identity. Once heterosexual bias is acknowledged, we find in the Ageless Wisdom a constructive notion of identity that is developmental and is viewed as a life project rather than a given. Identity is always under construction, with initiation leading from one expansion of consciousness towards another, and is ultimately not to be confined within the personality. The human identity develops from the whole process of alignment and integration between one center of experience and another. Within the Ageless Wisdom tradition, the whole purpose of integration is to break free from the separative “I” and give birth to group consciousness. When groups operate as the One Soul, through the synthetic power of love, then distinctions of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, or others should not matter.

And here we find a number of basic misunderstandings. Heterosexual imagery seems to assume that inner unity is dependent on external duality – the literal merging of the male and female – rather than on inner integration of male and female energies within the self. And yet we are taught in the Ageless Wisdom that “sex is but the symbol of an inner duality which must be itself transcended and wrought into a unity. It is not transcended by physical means or rituals. It is a transcendence in consciousness.”²⁰

Esotericism, as a discipline, is the study of ancient wisdom regarding the nature of reality and the divine Plan through reading, reflection, meditation, and practice with the understanding that, while that wisdom is accepted initially on faith (a willingness to act “as if”), it is tested through experience.

As we become more conscious of the nature of reality and the responsibility we bear for all of our actions, we look for ways to consciously cooperate with the Soul. That dynamism is part of the interaction between the Soul learning to operate on the physical plane and the personality learning to commune, and attain unity, with the Soul. The application of esotericism, with detachment and right mindfulness, results in the ability to influence one’s environment, bringing light and peace, since energy follows thought.

Our Responsibility for Negative Thoughtforms

One final point can be made regarding the need to reconsider the effects of negatives attitudes about homosexuality and our responsibility in relation to them. As esoteric students, we know that our thoughts can contribute to generating thoughtforms. When a critical mass of thinkers around the world sustain the same thoughtform for a long time, it acquires a life of its own that is vitalized by the energy of the thinkers. If that thoughtform is judgmental and divisive, it contributes to separateness. It is thoughtforms of this kind that we are called on to dissipate in order to heal cleavages and institute right human relations.

One of the greatest impediments upon the Path of Return, and one for which humanity is distinctly responsible within occult limits, are those animated forms that humanity has produced ever since the middle of the Atlantean root race when the mind factor began slowly to assume increasing importance. The selfishness, the sordid motives, the prompt response to evil impulses for which the human race has been distinguished has brought about a condition of affairs unparalleled in the system. A gigantic thoughtform hovers over the entire human family, built by persons everywhere during the ages, energized by the insane desires and evil inclinations of all that is worst in human nature, and kept alive by the promptings of humanity’s lower desires. This thoughtform has to be broken up and dissipated by humanity itself... Under the Law of Karma, it has to be dissipated by those who have created it.²¹

Any time that a member of the human family is stigmatized as deviant, perverse, or abnormal we are building walls that we will sooner or later have to tear down.

This writer knows firsthand of brothers and sisters on the path who have felt alienated in our close vicinity, either directly stigmatized or indirectly threatened by what they read and were unable to process. It is to their struggle to make sense of their identity and role within our group that this paper is dedicated—a struggle that humbles us and gives us hope that a new history can be written.

Conclusion

We have seen that being esoteric students brings with it the responsibility to be alert for the biases and prejudices of others and to question them. Rather than viewing homosexuality as an abnormal expression of human relations, exploring the nature of homosexuality can shed light on how we express love and experience our unity. It is through an awareness of diversity – not from separateness – that we learn about our uniqueness. A world of unity in diversity would be a world of un-sameness.

¹ The term “homosexuality” 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).

² Alice A Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 236.

³ From http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/homophobic_hate_crime_final_report.pdf.

⁴ J. Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known.*, ed. Mary Lutyens (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1975 reprint of 1969 original edition).

⁵ “The Dissolution of the Order of the Star: A Statement by J. Krishnamurti,” *International Star Bulletin* (September 1929): 28-34. (Eerde: Star Publishing Trust). OCLC 34693176. J.Krishnamurti Online.

⁶ Extract from a declaration made by the Tibetan in August 1934.

⁷ Alice A Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 681.

⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Unfinished Autobiography* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 213.

⁹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1953), 53.

¹⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. I* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1936), 268-307.

¹¹ See American Psychiatric Association, *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* [DSM II on].

¹² World Health Organization, *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (Geneva: WHO, 1990), 11.

¹³ See <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

¹⁴ “Homophobia” refers to attitudes of irrational fear and hostility towards homosexuals, which lead to discrimination and violence.

¹⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. I*, 277.

¹⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 5-6.

¹⁷ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. I*, 268-307.

¹⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1925), 593-595.

¹⁹ Michael Warner, “Fear of a Queer Planet,” *Social Text* 9, no. 4 (1991): 3-17.

²⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 385.

²¹ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1925), 948.