PURSUING THE ORIGINS OF “SEX AGAINST NATURE”: A GENEALOGICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRAECO-ROMAN AND CHRISTIAN THINKING CONCERNING MALE SAME-SEX SEXUALITY

A Thesis by

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The following faculty have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommended that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in History.

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DEDICATION

To my mother Ana María, my brother César, my boyfriend Cody, and my friend Carol. I hope I made you proud, thank you for your love
When a lawgiver wishes to enslave a certain desire which especially enslaves human beings, it's easy to know, at least, how he should handle it. By having everyone—slaves, free men, children, women, the whole city in agreement together—hold this pronouncement to be something sacred, he will have succeeded in making this law very firm.

Plato
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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to explain the origins and evolution of the philosophical antagonism to male same-sex sexuality under the argument that same-sex relations were contra naturam. It spans from classical Greece through the early middle-ages, and covers Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Greek Stoicism, Roman Stoicism, Judaism, Neoplatonism, and Christianity. A recurrent presence behind all antagonism to male same-sex sexuality was the Socratic ethics of abstention, and notions of natural and supernatural teleology. Other contributors were negative social connotations of passivity in adult men, and the intrinsic power differences that existed within the male same-sex relationships of antiquity. The argument that same-sex relations go against nature seems to fare worse under more modern understandings of the universe, animal sex-life, and the evidence against intelligent design in the evolution of life forms.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. HISTORIOGRAPHY: BOSWELL, FOUCALUT, AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SOCRATIC ETHICS, GREEK PHILOSOPHY AND SAME-SEX EROS ACCORDING TO PLATO</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. STOICISM AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND ITS GREEK UNDERPINNINGS</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTERWORD: AGAINST NATURE. WHAT NATURE?</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

From the Supreme Court's decision declaring the sodomy laws unconstitutional in 2003, through the passage of same-sex marriage legislation in Massachusetts (2004), California (2008) and Iowa (2009), people identified with the queer community have been at the forefront of the news media and political discourse in the United States. In the American continent, same-sex marriage became a reality in Argentina in 2010 following Canada (2005) as the only countries in the continent to pass such legislation, but a few other countries and municipalities have also adopted different types of civil union laws in their respective jurisdictions. While significant signs of progress, these political gains of the queer communities were not uncontested. Although President George W. Bush's attempt at an amendment to the U.S. Constitution banning same-sex marriage failed, his effort was echoed in many state legislatures, and several state constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage were enacted between 2004 and 2006. More recently Barack Obama's election as the first African American president of the United States coincided with the popular repeal of same-sex marriage in the State of California, and in a more extreme case, Uganda's Congress is currently debating a law proposing to make homosexual activity illegal, punishable by life imprisonment and death.

Whatever the differences in outcomes and geographic areas where these debates rage, and whatever arguments are exposed from one side or the other, one argument always seems to be present in the discussion. Since homosexual sex does not lead to reproduction, the argument assumes that homosexual sex is not a natural component of human behavior. From these premises, homosexual sex is considered against nature, or *contra naturam*. 
Not too long ago in the twentieth century *contra naturam* was not only an argument against homosexuality, but also a principle enshrined in every state legislation of the United States dealing with criminal sexual offenses.¹ The General Statutes of Kansas of 1949 established penalties of up to ten years in prison and hard labor for *crimes against nature*, which referred to acts “committed with mankind or with beast.” Homosexual behavior was not singled out as a particular offense, but it was grouped together with other “deviant” sexual behaviors such as pedophilia, bestiality, and heterosexual anal and oral intercourse.² Another term found in the law to refer to these types of acts was sodomy, and these laws persisted in the books until the Supreme Court's decision of *Lawrence v. Texas.*³

As ubiquitous as *contra naturam* has proved to be in our present and not so distant past, its usage against same-sex sexual behavior has also had a long history. As basis for a position against sexual behaviors with persons of the same sex, *contra naturam* became widespread in the writings of some of the most influential Christian theologians during the late Roman Empire, and early and late Middle Ages.⁴ Its twin term sodomy derives from the Old Testament story of Sodom, but it was first used as a noun denoting a category of sinful non-procreative sexual behaviors in the eleventh century, in Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus.*⁵ Notwithstanding, active male same-sex sexual relations did not seem to have been repressed in either ancient

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³“The liberty protected by the Constitution allows homosexual persons the right to choose to enter upon relationships in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons,” *Lawrence et al. v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).
Greece or Rome, which begs the question, how did antagonism against same-sex relations originate?\(^6\)

**Purpose**

As frequently as *contra naturam* has been used in religious discourses concerning homosexuality, one could be led to believe that the concept as applied against same-sex relations was originated with the rise of Christianity in the early Middle-Ages. Historian John Boswell was one of the first to dispel this myth. In describing the cultural context of Late Antiquity, Boswell expressed:

> Since Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire from the fourth century on and was the only organized force to survive the final disintegration of Roman institutions in the West after the barbarian invasions of the fifth century, it became the conduit through which the narrower morality of the later Empire reached Europe. It was not, however, the author of this morality. The dissolution of the urban society of Rome and the ascendance of less tolerant political and ethical leadership occasioned a steady restriction of sexual freedom which transcended credal boundaries. This is not to deny that Christian synods and princes enacted penalties against homosexual relations during the period. But execution is different from authorship, and it is misleading to characterize Christianity as somehow peculiarly liable to antigay feelings or doctrines. All the organized philosophical traditions of the West grew increasingly intolerant of sexual pleasure under the later Empire, and it is often impossible to distinguish Christian ethical precepts from those of pagan philosophy during the period.\(^7\)

Michel Foucault went even farther than Boswell, and identified conceptual elements against same-sex relations as early as in Classical Greece.\(^8\) Plato seemed to have been the first to pronounce that male same-sex sexual relations went against nature, and he was echoed centuries later by Roman Stoics, Hellenized Jews, and the Neoplatonists. This philosophical antagonism to same-sex sexuality—which need not always have reflected broader societal contexts—stemmed

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\(^7\)Ibid., 127-128.

from a strict adherence to a Socratic ethics of abstention in food and sex, which considered excessive and unmanly any pleasures that went beyond the minimum requirements of bodily satisfaction for survival. Intrinsic to the Socratic ethical worldview was the assumption of an intelligent design of the universe, whereby the laws of nature—or the supernatural—and human ethics were intrinsically linked, and knowledge of the former informed the latter. Human beings could only aspire to fulfill their purpose in life by acting according to nature, or God's design, and this invariably only stipulated the most frugal uses of pleasures and bodily satisfaction. According to this line of reasoning, same-sex sexual relations went against nature because they went beyond a minimally pleasurable use of sex only aimed toward procreation. This Socratic paradigm, albeit differently adapted to suit the different philosophical schools and time periods, was to dominate philosophical understandings of sex throughout antiquity, and has continued to have influence to our days through the “conduit” of Christianity.

Assuming this continuity of the Socratic ethics of abstention, the purpose of this research is to trace the philosophical roots and historical development of antagonism against same-sex relations by examining both the philosophical contexts and specific discourses used against same-sex relations. On this we will be mirroring the work done by Foucault in his *Use of Pleasures* and *Care of the Self*, but in addition to Foucault we will also examine in a more detailed manner the different philosophical theories under which *contra naturam* was constructed, taking time to deal with some of the main tenets of Platonism, Roman Stoicism, Neoplatonism, Judaism and Christianity. This approach will ultimately allow us to better understand the construction and evolution of the “vice” against nature. With this purpose in mind, we will begin in Chapter 2 with Plato in Classical Greece, overviewing some of the main tenets of his noetic philosophy as opposed to Aristotle and Epicurus, and we will deal with the
Socratic ethics of self-control and moderation in the context of ancient Greek understandings of same-sex relations. In Chapter 3 we will get acquainted with Stoicism and its Roman adaptations, and Roman views on sex, marriage and same-sex relations. And Chapter 4 will take us to Philo and Paul, and then Late Antiquity with the Neoplatonists and the Latin Christian Fathers. All throughout, the concept of *contra naturam* will make repeated appearances, albeit under different philosophical constructs, informing positions against same-sex relations. At last, in the Afterword I will be discussing *contra naturam* in the context of modern science.

But before commencing the long journey descending into the *città dolente*, it will be important to first make a detour and delve into the historiography of the field. An important question that has haunted historians of sexuality in the last three decades was whether we can effectively talk about gay and lesbian populations before our modern era. Another important issue was to determine the role that Christianity played in the historical development of antagonism against same-sex relations. These two issues were intrinsic to the origin and development of the history of sexuality, and they were at the heart of two texts which effectively helped launch the field: Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, and Foucault's *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. Ultimately, reviewing the historiography of the history of sexuality will serve to clarify the methodology to be used in this paper.
CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY: BOSWELL, FOUCALUT, AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Although there were works written about sex in history before the 1980s—most notably Foucault's History of Sexuality, Vol.1—there were not enough studies devoted particularly to homosexuality. This situation changed with the appearance of a young historian from Yale by the name of John Boswell. With his provocative and highly controversial Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality (CSTH) published in 1980, Boswell became a celebrity. According to Carolyn Dinshaw, Boswell achieved “a level of attention in the United States that was staggering.” His book sold out almost immediately going into five printings in the first year, and Newsweek magazine ran a positive review of the book, including a becoming photograph of the young author for his gay admirers to enjoy. CSTH’s influence was also felt in such unrelated settings as the military, law courts, and even organized religions. In CSTH Boswell argued that medieval Christian society had been for the most part tolerant of homosexuals. He postulated that although at some points in history homosexuals suffered persecutions, gay people formed their own communities, and were largely accepted in urban areas well until the mid-thirteenth century. Boswell's book argued for assimilation on the bases of historical evidence showing that gay people had always been a part of western societies, and that their being tolerated was contingent upon the type of societies where they lived.9

Although greatly respected in non-academic settings, Boswell's book came under

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increased scrutiny within the new field of the history of sexuality. The criticism that Boswell received was not leveled at his intention to make homosexuality respectable in his time, rather what came under fire were the historian's methodology and conclusions. From the many arguments leveled against Boswell, two were particularly influential. The first had to do with one of the main theses of *CSTH*, which posited that Christianity was not responsible for the historical antagonism to same-sex sexuality. Boswell stated:

Much of the present volume, on the other hand, is specifically intended to rebut the common idea that religious belief—Christian or other—has been the *cause* of intolerance in regard to gay people...In the particular case at issue, the belief that the hostility of the Christian Scriptures to homosexuality caused Western society to turn against it should not require any elaborate refutation.\(^{10}\)

Essential to Boswell's argument was his view that the Christian religion was not homophobic in its foundation. In his exegesis of Romans 1:26-27, a letter in which Paul seems to disparage same-sex relations, Boswell interpreted it more as an indictment against all excessive sexual pleasures rather than as a position specifically geared against homosexuals.\(^{11}\) This interpretation became controversial for both queers and Christians, and it did not take long for the first wave of criticism to appear. In a review of *CSTH* written by Michael Bronski for the *Gay Community News*, the critic blasted the Yale historian for his unfounded historical defense of Christianity. He characterized Boswell's work as a “medieval fortress” of facts, with a preconceived thesis, and with facts “forced into place.” Boswell's idea that the Church was merely responding to popular homophobic pressures was deemed by the reviewer a “cover-up to

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\(^{10}\)Boswell, *CSTH*, 6-7. This argument had been espoused years before by Bailey in his *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, where he stated: “I shall hope to show that the legend of the ‘persecution’ of the homosexual by the Church is a gross and unwarranted exaggeration, and that the picture of warped and narrow-minded clerics, obsessed with a horror of sodomy, delivering hordes of innocuous inverted to the *vindices flammeae* is largely a ludicrous invention of modern rationalism,” Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975, 1955), x.

\(^{11}\)Fundamental in Boswell's interpretation was his understanding that the Greek term usually referred to as *unnatural* actually meant *beyond nature*, referring more to an unusual behavior not bad in itself, rather than to a behavior that was wrong for being unusual, Ibid, 111-112.
protect the church and place the blame on what is commonly called the 'vulgar masses.'” Bronski considered that Boswell's book reflected “the attitudes and prejudices of someone intimately involved with the descendants of those institutions he is writing about,” and benefitted “not gay people, the common reader, or even scholarship, but rather” the “institution of the church and religion in general.”

Echoing these charges, the New York chapter of the Gay Academic Union released the overtly polemic *Homosexuality, Intolerance, and Christianity: A Critical Examination of John Boswell's Work* only one year after *CSTH*'s publication. Composed of three articles written by Warren Johansson, Wayne Dynes and John Lauritisen, *HIC* criticized Boswell like no other work. John Lauritisen condemned Boswell for “exonerating Mother Church for her role in the oppression of homosexual men,” and Warren Johansson criticized the historian's “flimsy” arguments that “are so evasive that they can only be linked to the reasoning by which a political columnist seeks to convince a half-educated audience.”

Johansson also accused Boswell of disregarding the rich biblical and Judaeo-Hellenistic tradition of homophobia deeply influential to the Christian fathers' views of sex, considering the young historian's analysis of the evidence as biased and driven by an agenda. Although not in complete agreement as to the degree, the three scholars seemed to agree that Christianity was an important source, if not the main source, for the historical hatred of same-sex sexuality in the West.

Boswell also received criticism from the right of the political spectrum. In an article in the *Journal of Religious Ethics* published in 1986, famous New Testament scholar Richard Hays characterized the historian's exegesis of Romans 1 as “seriously flawed,” accusing Boswell of

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reading his own agenda into the text.\textsuperscript{15} In his article, Hays argued that the preceding sentences leading up to Romans 1:26-27 showed how homosexual behavior was linked to idolatry, a behavior that implied the rejection of God himself, as homosexuality went against God's creation of men and women to be “one flesh” and multiply. Hays also placed Paul in the context of contemporary anti-sex and anti-same-sex views from Hellenistic Jews such as Philo Judaeus, and like Johansson, he considered that these views may have been influential to Paul's writing.\textsuperscript{16}

A second line of attack against Boswell became more pervasive and influential in the long run, leading to a debate that helped create and direct the destiny of the history of sexuality. This attack was directed at Boswell's methodology, more specifically at his consideration that there were “gay people” in pre modern times. Boswell's entire title read \textit{Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality; Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century}. Particularly noteworthy are the words “homosexuality” and “gay” as being applied to populations before the fourteenth century. Crucial to Boswell's argument was the notion that gay people had always existed, and that if the Christian Church and western societies accepted gays before, there was no reason for them not to do it today. From the start, Boswell's thesis very much hinged on the existence of pre-modern “homosexuals.”

Aware of the weight that these terms bore, the young historian dedicated an entire chapter of his book to deal with just how and why he was going to use them. He stated that:

“Homosexuality” refers to the general phenomenon of same-sex eroticism and is therefore the broadest of the categories employed; it comprises all sexual phenomena between persons of the same gender, whether the result of conscious preference, subliminal desire, or circumstantial exigency. “Gay,” in contrast, refers to persons who are conscious of erotic inclination towards their own gender \textit{as a distinguishing characteristic} or, loosely, to things associated with such people, as “gay poetry.” (my

\textsuperscript{15}Richard B. Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1,” \textit{The Journal of Religious Ethics} 14, no.1 (Spring, 1986): 184. (“Boswell,'s text) is, in short, a textbook case of ‘eisegesis,' the fallacy of reading one's own agenda into a text,” Ibid, 201.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 191, 193. More on Romans 1:27 in chapter 4.
Here Boswell considered the term “homosexuality” applicable to purely sexual behaviors with persons of the same sex, without entailing a particular awareness or meaning attached to them, whereas “gay” referred to an internal mental state of people who were conscious of a preference toward people of the same sex in their erotic inclinations, identifying themselves according to this preference. This consciousness would presumably entail a certain sexual orientation, which would allow us to view people from the past with such predispositions as “gay,” whether they had “gay sex” or not. Criticism of Boswell’s application of these definitions to past societies became widespread, and it quickly evolved into a matter of life and death for the field to settle. The debate that ensued as a consequence is known as essentialism vs. social constructionism, lasting upwards of a decade, and helping define the future direction of the field.18

Foucault and Social Constructionism

Although Boswell has been mentioned so far as more or less a pioneer of the history of same-sex sexuality, other historians had done work on the subject before him, and some were adopting constructionist methodologies and conclusions in their works.19 Social constructionism put forth the idea that our modern sexual categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality were cultural inventions, fictions that became widespread through the work of a late nineteenth century German medical science influenced by psychological discourses of perceived sexual pathologies, based on a binary of “normal” and “abnormal” behaviors. Evidence for this was

17 Boswell, CSTM, 44.
given in the form of the relatively recent appearance of the term “homosexual,” and the widely divergent patterns of same-sex behaviors in pre modern—and modern—societies which did not conform to this label. According to this view, the monolithic and commonly understood homosexuality of current times did not exist before modern times, and 'gay,' 'lesbian,' and 'homosexual' were not proper terms to be used when describing past societies.\(^{20}\)

Michel Foucault can be identified as the father of social constructionism in the study of human sexuality in history.\(^{21}\) Foucault's *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, published in its original French in 1976 and in English two years later, revolutionized the way scholars understood the role of sex in modern and pre-modern societies. Foucault posited that instead of repressing sex, our Western industrial societies have talked about it *ad nauseam*, and elevated the role it played in our lives to unparalleled degrees not known in pre modern times. The multiplicity of discourses regarding sex and the interest that medicine took into non-normative sexual behavior in the late nineteenth century helped create the sexual categories with which we are all too familiar today.\(^{22}\) According to Foucault, people's sexual preferences may not have defined their entire personality before the nineteenth century, and engaging in same-sex behavior was only understood as the sin of sodomy, which encompassed forbidden sexual practices which anyone could commit.\(^{23}\) The advent of modern medicine and psychoanalysis, and their theories of deviance based on non-normative gender and sexual behavior helped reify the 'morally corrupt' sodomite as the 'mentally unstable' modern homosexual, whose aberrant sexuality was both a

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\(^{23}\) Although he may not have meant that other possible sexual identities did not exist even in pre modern societies, since what Foucault was describing were discursive realities and not necessarily empirical ones. See David Halperin, “Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality,” *Representations* no. 63(Summer, 1998): 96-99.
symptom and a cause of his disease. Referring to this shift Foucault famously stated,

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.24

Later historians of sexuality identified the word 'homosexual' as making its first appearance in two anonymous pamphlets published in 1869 by the Austrian translator Karl Maria Kertbeny, in the context of a campaign to avoid the penalization of homosexual sex in the Federation of North German States.25 Notwithstanding this first appearance, the concept of a sexual identity based solely on same-sex sexuality seemed to have originated a few years back in the writings of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a German advocate for freedom of sexual choice who described himself as having a “woman's soul confined by a male body.” Ulrichs understood his sexual preference to be a “third sex” or a hermaphroditism of the soul, and identified same-sex lovers as “uranists,” or “urnings.”26 Unfortunately, Ulrichs's writings had the opposite effect of what he intended, influencing medical theories about “sexual inversion” which were to categorize ‘uranism’27 as a pathological condition. In the same year when the term

24Foucault, History of Sexuality: Volume 1, 43.
26“About the middle of the 'sixties' a certain assessor, Ulrichs, himself subject to this perverse instinct, declared, in numerous articles, under the nome-de-plume 'Numa Numantius,' that the sexual mental life was not connected with the bodily sex; that there were male individuals that felt like women toward men (anima muliebris in corpore virili inclusa). He called these people 'urnings,' and demanded nothing less than the legal and social recognition of this sexual love of the urnings as congenital and, therefore, as right; and the permission of marriage among them,” Dr. R. v. Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct, A Medico-Forensic Study, trans. F.J. Rebman (New York: Physicians and Surgeons Book Company, 1935), 337-338; Eribon, “Foucault's Histories of Sexuality,” 55; Halperin “Sex Before Sexuality,” 39.
27The term “uranist” was adopted from Plato's Symposium, where Pausanias identified two types of Eros, one coming from an older Aphrodite, daughter of Uranus, called herself Urania. The Eros from this older lineage was a “better” love, which was the love of boys for the purpose of philosophy. On the other hand, the Eros from the younger Aphrodite was concerned with the “common” love of women and boys for the purpose of their bodies. Plato
“homosexuality” was coined, German physician Karl Friedrich Otto Westphal published an article on “antipathic sexual instinct,” where he used Ulrichs concepts and explained them in the context of an abnormal psychological condition. Westphal's line of reasoning inaugurated a medico-psychological tradition of conceptualizing homosexuality as an innate mental disease associated with non-normative gender expressions, and the homosexual as a victim of this condition who could not easily escape it. Arguably one of the first and most renowned of the sexual theorists to have discussed “the homosexual” was the German physician Richard von Krafft-Ebing. He distinguished between developed and congenital homosexuality, and furthermore, he established several degrees of “gravity” within these categories. The male homosexual who acquired his “antipathic sexuality,” invariably did so on account of masturbation, while women acquired theirs from a “fear of the result of coitus (pregnancy), or abhorrence of men, by reason of physical or moral defects.” However, the congenital homosexuals were already born with their “deviance,” and they could not help it; these were Ulrichs's “urnings.” Krafft-Ebing theorized that the cause of “uranism” was ultimately hereditary, and could be found in past relatives since in “almost all cases where an examination of the physical and mental peculiarities of the ancestors and blood relations has been possible, neurosis, psychoses, degenerative signs, etc., have been found in the families.” Moreover, the “anomaly” could be found in the “cerebral organization of the affected individuals,” and in “disturbances in

Symposium 180d-181d; Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, 341.
28We owe thanks to Westphal...for the first systematic consideration of the manifestation (homosexuality) in question, which he defined as 'congenital reversal of the sexual feeling, with consciousness of the abnormality of the manifestation,' and designated with the name, since generally accepted, of antipathic sexual instinct...He holds fast to the opinion that the condition is congenital,” Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, 338; Eribon, “Foucault's Histories of Sexuality,” 55.
29Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis, 286-287, 294. In the lesser degrees, these men and women could go back to heterosexuality, “there is an immediate return to normal sexual intercourse as soon as the obstacles to it are removed,” Ibid, 286.
the present stage of evolution.” Later nineteenth century theorists such as Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud tended to frame homosexuality exclusively in terms of object-choice, which could be independent of the gender of the brain of the “afflicted” person. Nevertheless, the concept that homosexuality was an aberrant condition was still present in their writings. Notwithstanding these first medical theories of “the homosexual,” some sexual theorists of the early twentieth century were still reticent to view same-sex preference as a marker of an identity. In a footnote added in 1915 to his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud specifically stated that:

> Psycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character... On the contrary, psycho-analysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex... is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop.\(^\text{32}\)

The development of a mainstream view of personal identity based on a sexual preference that encompassed all homosexual expressions seemed to be a later phenomenon, occurring well into the twentieth century.\(^\text{33}\)

In addition to their belief in the homosexual social construct, social constructionists believed that all sexuality was constructed, specific to a time and a regional context, and developed through interaction and acculturation. In the words of Robert Pagdug, “nothing is

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\(^{30}\)Krafft-Ebing did not entirely subscribe to Ulrichs's notion of a “female brain in a male body,” but he did think that there was a disturbance in the development of a cerebral center, which provoked homosexuality. Furthermore, he adhered to Chevalier's theory that homosexuality was a relic of a bisexual past in the evolution of our species, and he took as evidence the prevalent bisexuality in the animal kingdom. In this theory, mono(hetero)sexuality was the desirable evolved stage of the human species, Ibid, 340, 344-345.


\(^{33}\)In discussing the situation of males attracted to their same-sex in prewar New York, George Chauncy stated: “Although the gay male world of the prewar years was remarkably visible and integrated into the straight world, it was, as the centrality of the drag balls suggests, a world very different from our own. Above all, it was not a world in which men were divided into “homosexuals” and “heterosexuals.” George Chauncy, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 12.
more essentially transmitted by a social process of learning than sexual behavior.” Although sexual acts had always existed and were naturally part of human ways of being, the “contents and meaning” of the acts—what we call sexuality,—and the impulses that led to them were specific to a cultural context. In Jeffrey Weeks's words:

Not only that attitudes towards same sex activity have varied but that the social and subjective meanings given to homosexuality have similarly been culturally specific. Bearing this in mind it is no longer possible to talk of the possibility of a universalistic history of homosexuality; it is only possible to understand the social significance of homosexual behavior, both in terms of social response and in terms of individual identity, in its exact historical context.

Kenneth Dover in *Greek Homosexuality* (1978) had discussed the widespread practice of same-sex acts in ancient Greece, but he was also very careful to note—notwithstanding the title—that the way pre modern people viewed these acts and relationships was different to what we understand today for homosexuality. Later social constructionists expanded upon these differences between modern and ancient same-sex sexuality, considering there to be a great gap between the two which merited an altogether different categorization for the pre-modern expressions of same-sex sexuality. In this vein David Halperin referred to the ancient Greek same-sex sexuality as pederasty, a system based on power and age asymmetries, and with rigid and well defined sexual roles for each partner. These asymmetries were also present in most of

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34The “naturalness” of homosexual behaviors has certainly been challenged by anti-gay essentialists, as it will be seen in later chapters; however most if not all of historians of sexuality (myself included) seem to adhere to the idea that homosexual relations are natural. For a more detailed argument see the Afterword.
37“The second problem concerns the ‘active’ (or ‘assertive,’ or ‘dominant’) and ‘passive’ (or ‘receptive,’ or ‘subordinate’) partners in a homosexual relationship. Since the reciprocal desire of partners belonging to the same age-category is virtually unknown in Greek homosexuality, the distinction between the bodily activity of the one who has fallen in love is of the highest importance,” Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 16; Boswell himself warned in *CSTH* about “projecting onto historical data ideas about gay people inferred from modern samples which may be entirely atypical,” although he was referring to modern notions of masculinity and femininity in lesbians and gays respectively, *CHST*, 24.
38Halperin, “Sex Before Sexuality,” 43-50; Greenberg, *Construction of Homosexuality*, 147-151. In referring to this “gap,” Padgug has stated that: “modern homosexuality and ancient pederasty, for example, share at least one feature:
the Roman Empire, and may have lasted well into the Renaissance in the case of some Italian cities.\textsuperscript{39}

In addition to the modern establishment of an identity based on same-sex preference, and the different conceptualizations that there were about same-sex relations in past societies, some constructionists also focused on the ways in which persons attracted to their same sex came to be perceived as homosexuals in our modern era.\textsuperscript{40} In her groundbreaking article “The Homosexual Role” published in 1968, Mary McIntosh explained the way in which many same-sex attracted people came to adopt homosexual identities in terms of self-fulfilling prophecy and the labeling theory of deviance. In the same way criminals and other social deviants were stereotyped as outcasts, people who had sex with persons of the same sex received a label characterizing them with their perceived deviancy. With this label, the homosexual also became identified with a social role which entailed social expectations that he could no longer escape, and any behaviors he produced served to reinforce the established homosexual role in terms of self-fulfilling prophecies.\textsuperscript{41} Part of McIntosh's criticism of the naturalization of homosexuality was also based on the term's unstable definitions. If the mere practice of sex with a person of the same sex

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\textsuperscript{39}Similar models are presented for Rome by Greenberg in \textit{Construction of Homosexuality}, 154, and by Mazo Karras in \textit{Medieval Sexuality}, 129. Michael Rocke was able to provide solid evidence from the arrest records from fifteenth century Florence for the prevalence of the pederastic system there, see Rocke, \textit{Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Appendix B, for the Statistical Tables on age and sex role of the offenders.

\textsuperscript{40}Ian Hacking and Arnold Davidson wrote about “dynamic nominalism,” in which the categories were created at about the same time of when there started to be people to fulfill them. According to this view, categories created new ways of being, and labeling and the adoption of the label by the labeled person were mutually reinforced, Ian Hacking “Making Up People,” 69-71; Arnold Davidson “Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality,” 121-122, in \textit{Forms of Desire}.

\textsuperscript{41}Mary McIntosh, “The Homosexual Role,” in \textit{Forms of Desire}, 27-29. It is important to remark that at the time when McIntosh wrote this article homosexuality was still a deviant identity, listed as a sexual pathology by the American Psychiatric Association, and criminalized throughout the United States. More positive connotations of a homosexual—or gay—identity would come later, with the feminist and sexual liberation movements of the early seventies. For further reference on this, see John D’Emilio, \textit{Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 237-239.
implied a homosexual identity, someone who had erotic fantasies with persons of the same sex but who never had homosexual sex could not be labeled a homosexual. Conversely, people who were not attracted to people of the same sex but had during their lifetime some type of homosexual activity would be labeled homosexuals. There was also the problem of how to categorize people attracted to both sexes, and how much homosexual sex or homosexual attraction could determine each category.\textsuperscript{42} Alfred Kinsey had addressed some of these problems in his \textit{Sexual Behavior in the Human Male}, published in 1948. A thirty seven percent of his male sample admitted to having had an orgasm with another male at some point in their lives; however only a four percent was exclusive in their sexual relationships with persons of the same sex.

Based on these results, Kinsey concluded that sexual behavior did not necessarily entail a sexual identity, and that “males” did not “represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual.”\textsuperscript{43} Instead of the binary, Kinsey proposed a continuum which rated people’s attraction on a scale from 0 to 6, with exclusive heterosexuality rating at 0, and exclusive homosexuality at 6.\textsuperscript{44} From Kinsey's studies, McIntosh considered that instead of asking about the causes of homosexuality—which denoted a heterosexist way of thinking,—“the conception of homosexuality” altogether became “itself” an “object of study.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{The Construction of a Debate: Boswell's War}

Boswell was not altogether unaware of these views when he wrote \textit{CSTH}, and he anticipated some criticism for his liberal use of the word gay as applicable to pre modern populations. He referred to the reticence that contemporary scholars had exhibited in using the

\textsuperscript{42}McIntosh, “The Homosexual Role,” 25-26; Boswell himself acknowledged this difficulty in \textit{CSTH}, 41.
\textsuperscript{44}Kinsey, \textit{Sexual Behavior in the Human Male}, 617, 637.
\textsuperscript{45}McIntosh, “The Homosexual Role,” \textit{Forms of Desire}, 27.
word, and in the same passage where he defined the terms “homosexual” and “gay,” Boswell recognized that his book had to “necessarily deal at length with other forms of homosexuality, because it is often impossible to make clear distinctions in such matters and because many societies have failed to recognize any distinctions at all.” However, it appears that Boswell in no way foresaw the avalanche of literature that was to be written against his work. In the aforementioned *Homosexuality, Intolerance, and Homosexuality*, Warren Johansson foreshadowed further polemics with Boswell when he stated:

> The anachronism of the author's approach to this subject is ubiquitous and grotesque, and runs contrary to the demand that should be made of the professional historian...It is not just the almost obsessive use of the terms “gay” and “gay people” that sustains this anachronism, it is the whole cast of mind which the narrative betrays.

More nuanced in his review of *CSTH*, Jeffrey Weeks argued that in using neologisms and imposing modern categories on pre modern societies, Boswell was glossing over the cultural meanings that pre modern societies may have adjudicated to same-sex sexuality. Weeks stated that “only by understanding sexuality and sexual meanings within their own cultural context can we actually grasp the ways in which moral norms are historically constructed.”

It seems clear that from the main two lines of attack that *CSTH* received concerning Christian tolerance and the existence of gay people in the Middle Ages, Boswell considered the latter a more serious threat. Only two years after the publication of *CSTH*, Boswell saw the need to defend his work in the article “Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories,” where he likened the debate between essentialists and social constructionists to that of realists and nominalists over universals—categories of thought—during the high Middle Ages. The same as realists saw categories as intrinsically part of the natural order and not dependent on human

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46 Boswell, *CSTH*, 44.
cognition, essentialists saw categories such as homosexuality as existing trans-historically in nature independent of culture or human perception. Nominalists begged to disagree, as they believed that human classifications of nature were artificial and only existed in human perceptions. Boswell characterized social constructionists as the modern standard-bearers of nominalism, seeing homosexuality as only an arbitrary name denoting a human classification that did not exist in nature. 49

Although Boswell attempted to distance himself from the essentialist position, 50 he gave a spirited defense to the notion that many of the characteristics attached to homosexuality in contemporary western societies were already present in antiquity, allowing the historians the luxury of identifying people in the past as gay, lesbian or homosexual. The most convincing piece of evidence presented by Boswell was Aristophanes's myth in Plato's Symposium, in which Aristophanes stated that humans were descended from three original sexes, one being male, one female and one both, all being round with eight limbs, and running “just like people doing cartwheels.” After these original creatures attempted to kill the gods, Zeus decided to cut them into halves so as to make them weaker, and the ensuing halves gave origin to the modern human species. The three different preferences for male same-sex, female same-sex and opposite-sex were outcomes of this original separation, and the longing to be reunited. 51 According to Boswell, this myth proved that even in Ancient Greece, a period thought to be radically different from ours in its sexual categorizations, homosexual and heterosexual sexual orientations could be distinguished. The fact that the Athenians had no specific words for these distinctions did not

50 According to him being an essentialist would imply having a theory about what causes homosexuality. In his revision of the article in 1988, he expressed that he “was and remain agnostic about the origins and etiology of human sexuality,” Ibid., 35.
51 Plato Symposium 189e-192e; Boswell, “Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories,” 25.
imply a lack of awareness about the existence of these categories. David Halperin answered to these assertions stating that although Aristophanes recognized distinctions in sexual tastes among the ancient Greeks, these distinctions were no more than mere preferences that did not necessarily resemble our modern sexual orientations. As evidence of how the myth could be deceptive to modern minds, Halperin unveiled a passage that Boswell had omitted in his reference to the *Symposium*, in which Aristophanes characterized the love between males with rigid patterns of age-differences and well established sexual roles for each partner, proper to the pederastic Greek system.

Another argument presented by Boswell against constructionists considered the potential damaging consequences that the theory could have on the emerging history of sexual minorities. Boswell noted that embracing social constructionism could “subvert minority history altogether,” since “if the categories 'homosexual/heterosexual' and 'gay/straight' are inventions of particular societies rather than real aspects of the human psyche, there is no gay history.” Other essentialists also considered the negative implications that social constructionism could have on the advancement of gay and lesbian rights. Wayne Dynes noted in his aggressively anti-constructionist article “Wrestling With the Social Boa Constructor” that:

Abandonment of the idea that homosexuals constitute a discrete social entity or minority will make it difficult to persuade already skeptical lawmakers that we deserve civil rights protections. This problem has led some to conclude that if SC provides a pretext for rejecting political reform, that defect alone should scuttle it.

Following this line, Steven Epstein identified a rift between gay and lesbian folk culture and

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53 In describing the descendants from the male original creature, Aristophanes stated “People like this are clearly inclined to have boy friends or (as boys) inclined to have lovers, because they always welcome what is akin. When a lover of boys (or any sort of lover) meets the real thing (i.e. his other half), he is completely overwhelmed by friendship and affection and desire, more or less refusing to be separated for any time at all.” Plato *Symposium* 192b-c; Halperin, “Sex Before Sexuality,” 44.
54 Boswell, “Revolutions, Universals and Sexual Categories,” 20.
academia, noting how the first embraced essentialist positions describing homosexuality as inborn and transhistorical, while the latter was more prone to social constructionist theories, linking homosexuality to modern western culture, and considering it a learned behavior. Epstein noted the paradox of how even if homosexuality was not transhistorical or inborn, gay and lesbian rights activists could be better served arguing from a more essentialist position *qua* gays and lesbians.\footnote{Steven Epstein, “Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism,” in *Forms of Desire*, 282-283.} Furthermore, Wayne Dynes noted that social constructionism ran counter to the common sense of many gays and lesbians whose sexuality did not change during their lifetime, and was closer to anti-gay psychoanalytical theories of cures that were very destructive and unsuccessful in their quest of changing the sexuality of their patients.\footnote{Dynes, “Wrestling,” 214.} Constructionists challenged these assumptions noting that their theory did not imply a denial of rights for gay and lesbian people, and that although homosexuality as a sexual identity was only a modern phenomenon, it was still real within its modern context.\footnote{Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 43.} Halperin argued that even if homosexuality was learned and not an *a priori* fixed sexual orientation, this did not mean that it could be unlearned. He noted:

Those categories (homosexuality and heterosexuality) aren't merely categories of thought, at least in my case; they're also categories of erotic response, and they therefore have a claim on my belief that's stronger than intellectual allegiance. That, after all, is what it means to be acculturated into a sexual system: the conventions of the system acquire the self-confirming inner truth of “nature.” If one could simply think oneself out of one's acculturation, it wouldn't be acculturation in the first place.\footnote{Ibid, 53. Psychologists Horowitz and Newcomb argued in 2002 that “for most people sexual identity is a core construct and often a permanent characteristic,” and that “the possibility of change in sexual identity” constitutes a “serious threat to the way in which people experience social reality and themselves,” which explained why for so many people's sexual identity remained more or less unchanged for the remainder of their adult lives. Horowitz, Newcomb, “A Multidimensional Approach,”, 12.}

When the dust was settled, social constructionism seemed to come out victorious from the academic wars on the epistemology of sexuality. However, social constructionism did not
come out unscathed, and some of the criticism it received was more carefully considered by more modern approaches to the study of sexuality. Moreover, the constructionist “victory” did not seem to appease a field still looking for its own identity. In Halperin's words:

> The constructionist-essentialist debate of the late 1980s should be seen as a particularly vigorous effort to force a solution to (the epistemology of sexuality), but even after constructionists claimed to have won the debate, and essentialists claimed to have exposed the bad scholarship produced by it, and everyone else claimed to be sick and tired of it, the basic question about the historicity of sexuality has remained (my parenthesis).  

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In one of his last articles on the debate, Boswell considered the whole discussion to be a gang attack on his person, as he was the only one being identified as an essentialist, a position which he did not even claim for himself. He feared that the social constructionists were waging “a kind of guerrilla warfare,” more concerned about attacking essentialists—or himself—without articulating their own theory.  

61 Before admitting the defeat of the essentialists, Boswell delivered his very own 'Christmas bombing' to the constructionist camp, criticizing it for disregarding all other constructions except for the sexual ones in their studies. He also noted that abstractions such as sexual categories were necessary in human thought, and that the mere absence of a term like “homosexual” in the past did not imply the absence of the concept, as it could just be a mere linguistic accident.  

62 From the many charges that Boswell leveled against social constructionists, ranging from the difficulties that constructionists had in communicating with the general public, to the unwisdom of constructing an epistemology of sexuality without caring to know its causes, one criticism seemed to have made the most impact for later approaches. Boswell noted that constructionists lacked an explanation for how people were active in incorporating the sexual categories assigned to them. He identified this point as the issue of “free will,” or “the extent to

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62 Ibid, 139-148. Boswell used the example of a female and a male cousin, as signifying that we can still make the distinctions between the two, while we only have the word “cousin” to describe both.
which humans determine their own character, preferences, interests, desires, etc,” without being automatons of social pressures.63

This issue would lead historians to be more concerned with the cognitive processes of their historical subjects, rather than worrying solely about their overt acts. It is important to remember that in CSTH Boswell identified “gay people” as consciously aware of their sexual preference, independently of their sexual behaviors. However, Boswell was also criticized for not addressing this aspect of his historical subjects in his own work.64 Foucault himself seemed to have been preoccupied with the issue of free-will in his later works. Arbitrarily pitted by the field as polar opposites of each other, Foucault was in fact an admirer of Boswell, as it is evidenced in a ‘fan letter’ that he sent to the latter congratulating him on his book.65 Moreover, Foucault took CSTH as a guide for his later works, in the separation that Boswell had made between homosexuals (having a same-sex preference without awareness) and gay persons (conscious of their same-sex preference). In a very surprising description of his methodology for his later works, the French father of social constructionism in the history of sexuality stated:

(Boswell's) introduction of the concept of “gay” (in the way he defines it) provides us both with a useful instrument of research and at the same time a better comprehension of how people actually conceive of themselves and their sexual behavior...Sexual behavior is not, as is too often assumed, a superimposition of, on the one hand, desires which derive from natural instincts, and, on the other, of permissive or restrictive laws which tell us what we should or shouldn't do. Sexual behavior is more than that. It is also the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it (my emphasis.)66

The greater paradox seemed to be that by the late 1980s, Boswell had already abandoned his original position concerning gay self-awareness for which he was credited by the French

63Ibid., 140.
64“Even though he uses ‘gay’ to denote ‘persons who are conscious of erotic inclinations toward their own gender,’ he gives no psychological dimension to this study,” Johansson, “Ex Parte Themis,” 2. Bronski, “Gay History: Setting the Record Straight,” review of CSTH.
65Dinshaw, Getting Medieval, 33.
66Ibid., 33-34.
Newer Approaches

The social constructionism of the seventies and eighties seemed to give way to queer theory in the nineties. The queer approach to the study of the history of human sexuality was in more than one way based on Foucauldian constructionism, in that it considered sexuality a historical product of its own social context, and avoided 'catch-all' sexual categories like “the homosexual.” Queer theorists expanded upon Foucault's relations of power and pleasures, focusing on the homosexual/heterosexual binary, and on the construction of heterosexualities as opposite to alternative gender and sexual expressions. This expanded focus on the alternative sexual identities of the present, they also lent to the past, as they purposefully attempted to “reconnect” with marginalized historical sexualities. This desire to connect with the past is very much Boswellian, but unlike the late historian, queer theorists acknowledged that the link they made was based not on similarities between present and past sexual categories, but on the shared marginality of trans-historically oppressed groups. In Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities Pre- and Postmodern Carolyn Dinshaw characterized this approach as “touching across time,” in order to create “transhistorical communities.”

Some queer theorists also criticized causal understandings of sexuality, and the arbitrary

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67 Regarding this Boswell has stated: “my position, perhaps never well understood, has changed. In my book Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality I defined 'gay persons' as those 'conscious of erotic inclination toward their own gender as a distinguishing characteristic' (p.44)...I would now define 'gay persons' more simply as those whose erotic interest is predominantly directed toward their own gender (i.e. regardless of how conscious they are of this as a distinguishing characteristic).” Boswell, “Revolutions,” 35.

68 Richardson and Seidman, Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 2-3.


70 Introduction to Constructing Medieval Sexuality, ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xiv; Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, preface to Premodern Sexualities, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York: Routledge, 1996), viii; Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger, introduction to Queering the Middle Ages, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xviii; Dinshaw, Getting Medieval, 21-22.

71 Ibid., 36-41.
periodization of historicism. They were against narratives positing a continual “evolution” of same-sex sexuality throughout time culminating in the twentieth century homosexual, as they were also against the idea of a 'Medieval sexuality' radically different from a 'Renaissance sexuality.' Queer theorists emphasized the discontinuity of social constructs such as sexuality, and they preferred histories of a specific time and place to the more holistic and expansive Foucauldian approaches. As a result, queer works frequently encompassed a compilation of essays written by different authors on particular aspects of sexuality within different time periods, in an effort to construct more textured and detailed narratives of the particular sexual systems of the historical societies being studied.

Indeed, one of the most salient aspects of the queer theory approach was its search for the subjectivity of the sexually non-normative populations of the past. The old Foucauldian dichotomy of act/identity was seen as outdated, as they tried to identify how past peoples understood their sexuality from their own perspective, beyond what societies seemed to say about them and the sexual acts that they performed. One of the ways they tried to get at this subjectivity was by focusing less on canonical and medical sources, and more on literary and folk ones. In their quest for recovering the sexual identities of the past, queer theorists also addressed possible inter-relations between sexuality and other social constructs such as religion, ethnicity, gender, and the human body.

Although greatly influential in the field, queer theory is currently not the only approach

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72 Ibid., 17; Burger and Kruger, introduction to Queering the Middle Ages, xii; Jacqueline Murray used the term “pre modern” to refer to the time period between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries, when she assumed there was “a set of underlying cultural assumptions” that was similar throughout the time, Murray, introduction to Desire and Discipline, xiii.
73 Burger and Kruger, introduction to Queering the Middle Ages, xvi-xvii; Fradenburg and Freccero, introduction to Premodern Sexualities, xi; Murray, introduction to Desire and Discipline, x; Introduction to Constructing Medieval Sexuality, xv.
74 Fradenburg and Freccero, introduction to Premodern Sexualities, x.
75 Introduction to Constructing Medieval Sexuality, ix-xvii.
being used in the study of human sexuality in history, as there seems to be an eclecticism of constructionist approaches. There are still approaches that tend to look at past mainstream discourses and traditional sources, engaging in more continuous and unified narratives. Jordan’s *Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* has been characterized as post-structuralist, a label frequently associated with queer theory, but Jordan’s sole use of canonical sources and conceptualizations seems to reminisce of a more classical constructionism. Although Jordan considered that there was a different conceptualization of same-sex acts in the Middle Ages, he insinuated that there might have also been an identity—based on theological doctrines—attached to people who practiced these acts.  

One of the main protagonists in the essentialist/constructionist debates, David Halperin, also seemed to have grown out of his polarizing previous constructionist position. He openly questioned what he deemed an artificial dichotomy of acts/identities created by the constructionists, and never intended by Foucault. In his work *How to Do the History of Male Sexuality*, Halperin modified his constructionism “by readily acknowledging the existence of tranhistorical continuities,” referring to these as possible historical sexual identities based on gender, status, and sexual activity that had held more or less constant in pre-modern times. His categories included effeminacy, “active” sodomy, friendship or male love, and inversion. In this view, the modern category of homosexuality constituted an accretion and condensation of the above named historical identities associated with same-sex sexuality.

An important criticism that all of these approaches have endured recently was their non-recognition of bisexuality as an epistemological tool for studying sexuality in the past. Indeed,

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77 David Halperin, “Forgetting Foucault,” 95-100.
essentialists, social constructionists and even queer theorists have mainly focused on homosexual and heterosexual acts, identities, and subjectivities, disregarding the possibility of bisexual ones.\textsuperscript{79} In his incisive article “Historicizing (Bi) Sexuality: A Rejoinder for Gay/Lesbian Studies, Feminism, and Queer Theory,” Steven Angelides explained this negligence in historical terms, from a modern construction of homosexuality as opposed to heterosexuality. The medical discourses of the late nineteenth century operated in this binary system, and theorists like Krafft-Ebing and Freud considered bisexuality in an evolutionary past tense, as the starting point from which heterosexual and homosexual inclinations could evolve, and not as an identity itself.\textsuperscript{80}

While queer theorists have been very vocal in their opposition to these hetero-normative discourses, they ended up making the same mistakes of their essentialist predecessors in not recognizing bisexuality in their studies. Regarding this negligence, Angelides stated:

> Queer theorists have in some ways unwittingly reproduced as history the binary framework of sexuality as it has been constructed by (among others) the heteronormative discourses of sexology, Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis/psychiatry. By misrecognizing the epistemological function of bisexuality they have remained blind to one of the logic of (sexual) identity's most telling ruses.\textsuperscript{81}

Currently there seems to be a consensus for the usage of constructionist and queer methodologies for the study of human sexuality in the past;\textsuperscript{82} however there are still some


\textsuperscript{80} Angelides, “Historicizing (Bi) Sexuality,” 131-132.


\textsuperscript{82} Genealogical critique, in short, is exactly the interpretative aim of most of the essays in this issue, one that the contributors say repeatedly must be done. For this reason, it seems premature to say that the field of the history of sexuality has moved past Foucault's usefulness,” Julian Carter, “Introduction: Theory, Methods, Praxis: The History of Sexuality and the Question of Evidence,” Journal of the History of Sexuality 14, no.1/2 (Jan-Apr., 2005): 8.
essentialists willing to question constructionist methods, and the validity of the alternative sexual identities posited by these.\textsuperscript{83} Among the queer theorists, there seems to be a sense of skepticism toward the methodologies being used, the reliability—or lack thereof—of historical sources in reflecting queer subjectivities, and the Foucauldian act/identity dichotomy.\textsuperscript{84} Julian Carter reflected this state of uncertainty in the field in his introduction to the special issue of the \textit{Journal of the History of Sexuality} addressed to methodology, stating that:

One might sum up the state of the field, as these contributions represent it, as a politically inflected dissatisfaction with the adequacy and accuracy of the available theoretical and methodological options, combined with an insistence that a transformation of scholarly consciousness in relation to our subject matter is essential if we are able to move our practice forward.\textsuperscript{85}

A Note on Methodology

Thus there seem to be many tools and angles from which to approach queer questions in history, but specific angles call for specific tools. The question I address in this project—the origin and development of the conceptualization of male same-sex acts as against nature—is more intellectual than empirical in nature, as I am dealing with historical arguments more than with specific peoples from the past. This is why questions about the nature of homosexuality will be somewhat ignored in lieu of broader questions regarding concepts and philosophical contexts. Notwithstanding the lack of a focus on empirical questions, when referring to past male homosexual populations I will assume the pederastic model put forth by Dover, Foucault and Halperin, as I find it more detailed historically and helpful to the questions I am asking.

Pederastic asymmetries were intrinsic, as it will be seen, to philosophical conceptions—and criticisms—of same-sex relations, and therefore I will attempt to refrain from using neologisms


\textsuperscript{84}Carter, “Introduction: Theory, Methods, Praxis,” 8-9.

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid, 6.
when referring to these.\textsuperscript{86} The method being used will be similar to Foucault's and Jordan's genealogical approach, first conceived by Nietzsche, where a modern concept is traced to the roots of its construction, and followed in its—not necessarily linear—evolution throughout different times in history. I chose to concentrate on the concept of same-sex relations as \textit{against nature} because it is a concept that has—unfairly—defined people attracted to their same sex for the most part of the modern and pre modern history of our western civilization. Since \textit{against nature} is a philosophical concept, I chose to focus more on philosophical contexts in which this concept was used to attack male same-sex relations, in order to better understand the reasons for the adoption of this antagonism to the relations in question.

In keeping with the sources and the specific focus of this thesis, there are some dimensions of same-sex sexuality that I will not be addressing. The greatest absence in this study will be female same-sex expressions, because this work is mostly focused on male sexuality. Assuming the scarcity of sources addressing female same-sex sexuality, and my non-familiarity with methodologies that could be appropriate for addressing dimensions that may go beyond sexual acts in female relationships, any attempt that I could make would fall short of its desired goal. Male same-sex expressions seemed to be the main focus of arguments against same-sex relations in antiquity, and \textit{against nature} was in more than one way a condemnation of male sexuality and pederastic relationships.\textsuperscript{87} And although the focus is placed on same-sex relations, it is important to remember that these were often had within a broader “bisexual” context, which will be discussed when dealing with pederasty. Nevertheless, possible interactions between

\textsuperscript{86}Referring to the populations of the past that were attracted to their same sex as simply “homosexual” would obscure many of the distinctive characteristics that these relationships had, as it will become clear in later chapters. Nevertheless, this does not imply a rejection on my part to ever using the term “homosexual” to refer to these populations. In the broadest sense of the word, they were homosexual, as they were attracted—albeit not always exclusively—to their same sex. But it would be similar to saying that the city of Milan is in Europe, when we could say that it is in Northern Italy.

\textsuperscript{87}However, \textit{against nature} was also used against female same-sex relations, most notably in Plato's \textit{Laws} 636c, and Paul's Romans 1:26.
sexuality, gender, and ethnicity will be noted, but the main focus will still be placed on the historical evolution of the conceptual apparatus behind discourses about male same-sex acts.

Lastly, I hope to make this research relevant to our contemporary world. Negative views about same-sex sexuality, notwithstanding a minor number of societies, seem to still prevail in our world. The role that the Judeo-Christian cultural heritage has played in what we consider to be moral or legitimate in the West has been great, and the idea that homosexual acts go against nature comes in part from this heritage, and in part from the Socratic philosophical tradition. This is why I chose to also discuss contra naturam in the context of modern science, since we may have shed some of the outdated philosophical views about our world that helped construct against nature, but we still have not shed against nature. With this research, I hope that I can at least show the historical basis for these views, and facilitate for the reader a more informed opinion on the “naturalness” of homosexuality.
CHAPTER II

SOCRATIC ETHICS, GREEK PHILOSOPHY AND SAME-SEX EROS ACCORDING TO PLATO

Socrates is said to be one of the first Greek philosophers to focus on morality.\(^8\) In those times, morality was understood differently from our modern sense. More than just a set of normative prescriptions that forced people to go against their wishes, morality consisted in the voluntary art of living a good life.\(^9\) This art was based on the Socratic view that there were absolute truths, rights and wrongs, which were reflected in human virtues and vices. The extent to which human behavior could become virtuous or vicious was determined by reason and its power of assertion over men's bodily impulses. Socrates recognized that the task was not easy, as bodily impulses like hunger and sexual arousal were vital for survival and could exert great pleasures, nevertheless he saw in the moderation of the pleasures the key to a happy life.\(^9\) As an embodiment of ethical perfection, Socrates exceeded at keeping pleasures at bay. In Plato's *Symposium*, the attractive younger Alcibiades gave an account of how he slept with Socrates under the same cloak with no sexual relations ensuing. In describing Socrates's character, Alcibiades referred to his “restraint and strength of mind,” capable not only of resisting his advances, but also of going days without food or water in military campaigns, and braving the

\(^{8}\)“Socrates is said to have been the first who directed the entire effort of philosophy to the correction and regulation of manners, all who went before him having expended their greatest efforts in the investigation of physical, that is, natural phenomena.” Augustine *City of God* 8.3.; A.A.Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 7.

\(^{9}\)Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 24.

\(^{9}\)“He prided himself on his plain living, and never asked a fee from anyone. He used to say that he most enjoyed the food which was least in need of condiment, and the drink which made him feel the least hankering for some other drink; and that he was nearest to the gods in that he had the fewest wants,” Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.25-27.
cold barefooted. Socrates was described as the ideal man, “whose equal, in intelligence and control” Alcibiades would not “ever meet again.”

The mastery of reason over the impulses was *enkrateia*, and the ensuing moderation of the pleasures was known as *sōphrosynē*, two key precepts of the Socratic understanding of morality, which in turn came to be adopted by virtually all of the main Greek philosophers who succeeded him. Plato was no exception, and in addition to his mentor, he incorporated the Socratic ethics into his broader (super)natural philosophy.

According to Plato the material world was created by the Demiurge, an intelligence whose work was analogous to a craftsman, ordering the universe into a well-organized system which we recognize as the cosmos. This Demiurge—or God—mixed together pre-existent traces of air, water, earth, and fire on an invisible receptacle, and he shaped this mixture into a sphere, which eventually became our cosmos. As the craftsman creates his work of art, the Demiurge created his cosmos according to a predetermined design. This design was based on a model consisting of forms, ideas that were eternal and insubstantial, existing independent of the material world of humans in a world of their own. The forms served as molds within which all matter took shape, exerting as a result a harmonious universe where everything followed a pattern and moved according to a plan. The existence of time was a good example of this divine design, as time was generated:

> after the pattern of the eternal nature, that it might be as like to it as was possible. For the pattern is existent for all eternity; but the copy has been and is and shall be throughout all

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91Plato *Symposium* 219c-220c.
92Socrates may not have made a distinction between the two, Aristotle seemed to have been the first in doing so, Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 63-64; Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 7-8.
94Ibid., 70.
95Plato *Timaeus* 32a-c; 53a-e.
96Ibid., 29c.
time continually. So then this was the plan and intent of God for the generation of time; the sun and the moon and five other stars which have the name of planets have been created for defining and preserving the numbers of time. And when God had made their several bodies, he set them in the orbits wherein the Revolution of the other was moving, in seven circles seven stars.\textsuperscript{97}

Our material world, planned as it was, was still a less than perfect copy, as it changed constantly and nothing in it could be known for certain. True knowledge resided in the eternal and unchangeable world of the forms upon which the material world was based, where the form of the good reigned supreme.\textsuperscript{98} We humans could not access the world of the forms easily, as we depended on our material world around us, and the information that we could gather from it through our senses. It was as if humans were living:

in a sort of cavernous chamber underground, with an entrance open to the light and a long passage all down the cave...chained by the leg and also by the neck, so that they cannot move and can see only what is in front of them, because the chains will not let them turn their heads. At some distance higher up is the light of a fire burning behind them; and between the prisoners and the fire is a track with a parapet built along it, like the screen at a puppet-show, which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top.\textsuperscript{99}

Human senses constituted the chains which did not allow people to see the light behind them, and realize that what they perceived was a mere mirage of reality. Access to the eternal reality of the forms could not be granted by the senses, thus something else was needed.

As part of creation, human beings were given an immaterial soul trapped inside a material body. This soul had three parts in its reason, spirit, and appetite. The rational soul was the highest, and in it were contained the reason of the forms, according to which the Demiurge thought the principles of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{100} This rational soul was able to identify what was best for the person, as it knew right from wrong; however the human soul also had two other irrational

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid, 38d-e.
\textsuperscript{99}Plato Republic 514a-e.
\textsuperscript{100}Plato Timaeus 90c-d “Three forms of soul with threefold functions are implanted in us, and each of these has its proper motions...As to the supreme form of the soul that is within us, we must believe that God has given it to each of us as a guiding genius.”
parts which were its appetites and its spirited desires “with which it feels hunger and thirst and is
distracted by sexual passion and all the other desires...associated with pleasure in the
replenishment of certain wants.”\(^{101}\) As the only part containing the knowledge of the forms, the
rational soul could lead a person away from the chains of the senses into the light of reason, but
for this to happen, humans needed to make their rational soul assert its power over its two lower
parts, by achieving *enkrateia*. In Phaedrus, Plato used the allegory of a winged charioteer
controlling “a pair of steeds...one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other
has the opposite character, and his stock is opposite.”\(^{102}\) In following the good horse, the
charioteer could hope to make it to heaven, but for this he had to control the bad horse, which
could drive the charioteer down to Earth. Likewise, humans were in a constant battle with their
passions and desires, and being able to live a good life required people to be in constant guard
against pleasure and self-indulgence.

Ultimately the practice of *enkrateia* and *sōphrosynē* enabled men to fulfill their *telos*\(^{103}\) as
human beings in the Platonic cosmos. Plato saw evidence of *sōphrosynē* all about him. In the
regular circular rotations of the planets, their shapes and distances, Plato found a balance and
order which he thought to stem from a design, based on the forms. The human body also
represented this design, with the perfect circular motions of the planets occurring in the soul
within the human head, and the rectilinear movements of material objects of the Earthly realm
occurring below the head.\(^{104}\) Blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile were the four elements which
composed the body, made out of different rations between the four material elements of water,

\(^{101}\) Plato *Republic* 439
\(^{102}\) Plato *Phaedrus* 246b.
\(^{103}\) The origin and definition of the word is given in Monte Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 2005), 30: “The exact term 'teleology,' or its equivalents in other languages, is not attested before
1728, when the German philosopher Christian Wolff, writing his Latin *Rational Philosophy or Logic*, recommended
teleologia as a name for that part of natural philosophy (*philosophiae naturalis pars*) which explicates the ends of
things (*fines rerum explicat*). 'Dicis posset Teleologia'...”
\(^{104}\) Johansen, Plato's Natural Philosophy, 1-3, 17-18.
earth, fire and air. In Greek medicine, maintaining a constant balance between the four humors was key to the health of the individual, as disease could occur from an excess or scarcity of any of the elements.\(^{105}\)

This need for order and balance by acting according to reason was also reflected in human societies. Indeed, Plato also admonished states to follow the principles of *enkrateia* and *sōphrosynē*. In his *Republic* and *Laws*, Plato dealt extensively with the subject of how to craft legislation for an ideal state, and he approached it by taking the human soul as the model to follow. In the *Republic*, Plato discussed the division of classes in an ideal state, with a philosopher-king who ruled according to the knowledge of the forms reflected in the legislation (the rational soul ruling according to the principles of the good), guardians who enforced the laws (the spirit acting in accordance with the rational soul), and artisans, merchants, and peasants who obeyed the laws and fed their society (the appetitive soul).\(^{106}\) In this Platonic model, cosmos, state and people were tied together by the laws of the forms which answered to a rational principle of divine design. Everything was interconnected in an eternal system of order and balance, and humans and their societies could be successful by recognizing the forms and following the principles of design.\(^{107}\) The dangers of deviating from these principles were exemplified by Persia and Athens, states which adopted *unnatural* political systems that either restricted much of the freedom of the people, relying on the whims of a self-indulgent king who disregarded good laws (Persia), or gave the people too much freedom, relying on the unwisdom

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\(^{105}\) Ibid., 19-20; physician Eryximachus states that the good physician should “be able to reconcile and harmonise the most disparate elements in the body...those most opposed to one another—cold and hot, bitter and sweet, dry and wet, and so forth. It was by knowing how to produce mutual desire and harmony among these that our forerunner Asclepius, as the poets say (and I believe) established this art of ours,” Plato *Symposium* 186d-e.

\(^{106}\) “We are fairly agreed that the same three elements exist alike in the state and in the individual soul,” Plato *Republic* 441c; Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 118-119.

of the populace (Athens).\footnote{Plato \textit{Laws} 695a-701d.}

Ultimately the adoption of this holistic philosophical model, linking ethics, politics, and metaphysics is what distinguished Plato from Socrates. Whereas Socrates referred to absolute moral truths without more explanation other than their intrinsic absoluteness, Plato was able to explain their absoluteness in a cosmological context, as part of a (super)natural teleology.\footnote{Demetrius of Byzantium relates that Crito removed (Socrates) from his workshop and educated him, being struck by his beauty of soul; that he discussed moral questions in the workshops and the market-place, being convinced that \textit{the study of nature is no concern of ours...}” Diogenes Laertius, \textit{Lives of Eminent Philosophers} 2.19-21. There is however evidence of scattered claims made by Socrates supporting his ethics in a cosmological context, see Johansen's Plato's Natural Philosophy, 3; Annas, Platonic Ethics, 106-107.}

According to Plato, our place in the world was what made it desirable and even imperative for us to be moral, in order to fulfill our \textit{telos}.\footnote{Although he seemed to have done it in a less radical way, accepting more moral conventions of his time. Long, \textit{From Epicurus to Epictetus}, 7-10; Foucault, \textit{Use of Pleasures}, 87.}


Like his mentor, he also adopted a teleology which he considered the rational principle directing his philosophy.\footnote{Cooper, \textit{Knowledge, Nature, and the Good}, 112-113.} Nevertheless Aristotle's teleology differed from Plato's in many respects. He did not conceive a separate world of the forms, different from our material world, as he thought that our universe and its living species were eternal, and that nothing existed outside of them.\footnote{Mind seems to be an independent substance engendered in us, and to be imperishable. If it could be destroyed the most probable cause would be the feebleness of old age, but, in fact, probably the same thing occurs as in the sense organs; for if an old man could acquire the right kind of eye, he would see as a young man sees. Hence old age is due to an affection, not of the soul, but only of that in which the soul resides...Thus the power of thought and speculation decays because something else within perishes, but itself it is unaffected.” Aristotle \textit{On the Soul} 408b.}

Aristotle also saw the soul as dependent on the body, functioning only as the body allowed it to function, and with a possible end which coincided with the death of the material body.\footnote{Cooper, \textit{Knowledge, Nature, and the Good}, 112-113.}

Furthermore, Aristotle did not resort to a Demiurge to explain his teleology. He found in the regularity of nature—as in the way rain came during certain seasons or the regular rotation of the
planets—and in the eternity of the living species the best arguments for a natural teleology, in which the telos was not given by an outside agent, but was already built within nature.\textsuperscript{114} He understood the natural world to be all that had motion and change, and everything within it as having four proper (non accidental) causes. The material (what is made of), formal (what it is), efficient (how it came to be) and final (what is its function or goal) causes could define every object in the world, and human beings were not exempt from this. The final cause was the moving principle enshrined within everything in nature, which enabled every object to fulfill the potentially of their formal cause, and direct their motion towards it.\textsuperscript{115} In Physics, Aristotle referred to this final cause, or telos, in more specific terms:

\begin{quote}
we observe that in plants...parts that appear to be generated which contribute to an end, for example, leaves for the sake of protecting the fruit. So it is both by nature and for the sake of something that the swallow makes its nest and the spider its web and that plants grow leaves for the sake of fruit and send their roots not up but down for the sake of food, it is evident that there exists such a cause in things which come to be or exist by nature. And since nature may be either matter or form, and it is the latter that may be an end while all the rest are for the sake of an end, it is form that would be a cause in the sense of a final cause.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

Human beings, the same as plants and animals, were also part of the natural objects that composed the universe, and as such they had material, formal, efficient and final causes. Their telos could be observed from their form, or souls.\textsuperscript{117} Aristotle built a hierarchy of living things according to the characteristics of their souls, with plants being at the bottom, having a reproductive soul and being capable of reproducing only. Non-human animals ranked higher than plants, as they had the capacity of perception and pleasure, in addition to reproduction. And humans were at the top of the hierarchy, having all of the aforementioned capacities in addition

\textsuperscript{114} Aristotle Physics 199a; Johansen, Plato’s Natural Philosophy, 76-77; Johnson, Aristotle on Teleology, 4, 7; Cooper, Knowledge, Nature, and the Good, 124, 128.
\textsuperscript{115} Aristotle Physics B 192b-195a
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., B 198a-b.
\textsuperscript{117} Aristotle On the Soul 412b, 415b.
to what made them unique, a soul with the capacity for reasoning.\textsuperscript{118} Reason then, was what according to Aristotle defined and set humans apart, and as their form, it also constituted their potential, or \textit{telos}. This is why Aristotle thought that a life lived according to reason ultimately led to happiness and fulfillment. This greatest of rational states he called \textit{eudaimonia}, a state of contemplation and unperturbed life, which was self-sufficient for a happy life.\textsuperscript{119}

Somewhat farther from Plato and Aristotle was Epicurus. Although fairly close in time and region—he was born on the seventh year of Plato's death and was contemporary to Aristotle, living a great part of his life in Athens—Epicurus knew how to distance himself from the metaphysical theories of Plato.\textsuperscript{120} A materialist through and through, he promulgated the atomic theory of Democritus, which proposed that the universe was composed of invisible particles called atoms, and space surrounding them.\textsuperscript{121} The atoms in question, he defined as elements composing bodies which were:

indivisible and unchangeable, and necessarily so, if things are not all to be destroyed and pass into non-existence, but are to be strong enough to endure when the composite bodies are broken up, because they possess a solid nature and are incapable of being anywhere or anyhow dissolved. It follows that the first beginnings must be indivisible, corporeal entities.\textsuperscript{122}

Nothing existed outside of matter and space, and the universe was eternal, infinite, random, and uncaused. For Epicurus there was no teleology to talk about, because there was no order in the world.\textsuperscript{123} Although he was not an atheist, Epicurus believed that the gods that existed were too perfect and inviolate to intervene in mere things of the world. They existed in the cosmos,

\textsuperscript{118}Johnson, \textit{Aristotle on Teleology}, 219-220
\textsuperscript{119}Cooper, \textit{Knowledge, Nature and the Good}, 270-295.
\textsuperscript{121}George K. Strodach, \textit{The Philosophy of Epicurus: Letters, doctrines, and parallel passages from Lucretius} (Northwestern University Press, 1963), 3-4.
\textsuperscript{122}Diogenes Laertius \textit{Lives of Eminent Philosophers} 10. 40-42.
\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., 10. 40-42, 87-89; Strodach, \textit{Philosophy of Epicurus}, 23, 25, 56.
unmoved and unperturbed, as perfect exemplars of what humans ought to strive for.\footnote{Ibid., 48-52.}

But arguably Epicurus's atomic theory was not what made him most famous. Through the times, Epicurus was blamed for being an advocate of hedonism and sensualism, due to his ethical theory of the pursuit of pleasures.\footnote{Epictetus has called him a “preacher of effeminacy,” Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers 10.6-7.} But Epicurus's hedonism was anything but advocating a life of delicacies. This, the Greek philosopher in question made sure to clarify himself:

> When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts, and of revelry, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the flesh and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul.\footnote{Ibid., 10.130-133.}

What Epicurus had in mind for “pleasure” was anything that had the least amount of risk for anxiety or pain. His hedonism was based on a strict and almost mathematical formula of pleasure minus pain, and anything that had the potential for disturbing the soul, had to be avoided.\footnote{“And since pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but oftentimes pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them,” Ibid., 10.128-130.}

Human happiness was fulfilled when all pain and anxieties were conquered, in the state of \textit{ataraxia}, which was similar to Aristotle's rational life of contemplation, or \textit{eudaimonia}.\footnote{He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward securing health of body and tranquility of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life. For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid,” Ibid., 126-128. Epicurus, like his Stoic counter-parts, equated the knowledge of nature with this peace of mind. In Epicurus's case, this had to do with the abandonment of supernatural superstitions and fear of the gods, since the knowledge that there was no afterlife, and no eternal punishment awaiting, could free people from their fear of death, to live their lives happily, Strodach, Philosophy of Epicurus, 14, 27.} This ethical theory, like Plato's, also seemed to leave out sexual pleasure and romantic love, because of the worries that these could bring on the long term.\footnote{“The Epicureans do not suffer the wise man to fall in love…No one was ever the better for sexual indulgence, and it is well if he be not the worse,” Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers 10.118-120.}

Ultimately the Socratic ethics—whether based on teleologies of the natural or
supernatural kind, or on no teleology at all—had a tremendous influence on philosophical conceptions of sex, as the regulation of sex was considered important in the art of living a good life. Plato's (super)natural teleology, on the long run, will prove to be victorious over the many other Greek philosophical schools, and his philosophy would become the most influential in Western civilization for two millennia, thanks to the triumph of Christianity. This is why understanding what Plato had to say about sex and same-sex relations—in the context of Greek philosophy—becomes paramount to this research, as it will help us approach the origin and evolution of same-sex relations as sex against nature.

Platonic Love and Greek Sexuality

Socrates and his disciples seemed to have experienced romantic love, or eros, differently throughout the course of their lives. While Socrates had a distinct reputation for being a paiderastēs, enchanting the most beautiful young men that Athens had to offer and falling madly in love with them, Aristotle seemed to be exceptional for experiencing romantic love within his marriage, with his wife Pythias.\(^\text{130}\) Plato, on the other hand, was believed to be one of the first philosophers to never have married, and be exclusively attracted to his same sex.\(^\text{131}\) Likewise, whereas there is a lot of material about Socrates's and Plato's ideas on eros and aphrodisia (pleasures related to sex), most of what Aristotle wrote on the subject appears to have been lost.\(^\text{132}\)

Socrates and Plato circumscribed their theories of love and sex to their ethical precepts of

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\(^\text{130}\) Socrates refers to attractive boy Critias in the following words: “When Critias told him that I was the man who knew the cure (for headache), and he looked me in the eye—oh, what a look!—and made as if to ask me, and everyone in the wrestling school crowded close all round us, that was the moment when I saw inside his cloak, and I was on fire, absolutely beside myself...All the same, when he asked me if I knew the cure for his head, I did somehow manage to answer that I knew it,” Plato Charmides 155c-d, as quoted in Dover, Greek Homosexuality, 155; Juha Sihvola “Aristotle on Sex and Love” in Martha Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola, eds, The Sleep of Reason: Erotic Experience and Sexual Ethics in Ancient Greece and Rome (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 205.


Plato conceived sexual pleasure to be similar to the pleasures derived from eating and drinking, fundamental for the survival of the human species, but detrimental when incurred in extremis. These impulses and the pleasures derived from them were part of the appetitive soul, which was the more animalistic part of the human soul, and one of the most intense and uncontrollable pleasures that men could experience was sex. Plato considered the impulses and pleasures of sex to be so strong, that they were a special case to be watched over by reason.\(^{133}\) Stemming from this intenseness of the carnal pleasures, the philosopher sought to manage the sex drive, by regulating romantic love, and placing constraints in the use of aphrodisia.\(^{134}\) However, Plato’s views on sex were still part of his philosophy of living a good life, free for anyone to choose or disregard at his own risk. What is more, Plato seemed not to have intended for everyone to follow his program, as he addressed his ideas to the ruling class of free men, in order to improve their morals as a way to achieve a perfect Republic.\(^{135}\)

When reading Plato’s Symposium, a book specifically aimed to addressing the subject of eros, one thing stands out to the eye of the modern reader. All of the speeches made—except for Socrates’s—were about the love experienced between men, or what was conceived in ancient Greece as relationships between an erastēs and an erōmenos. This is not mere coincidence. As noted before, ancient Greece had a predilection for same-sex relations between men and adolescent boys, framed within a system of social norms that regulated it, known today in the academic world as pederasty.\(^{136}\) These relationships, unlike the ones between men and women, were carried out in public spheres such as the gymnasium and other public places where women


\(^{135}\) Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 21, 61.

could not attend. Moreover, they were seen as important for forming the character of the young future leaders of the city, and an added value in war. The Greeks would not have understood today's arguments about openly gay men having a negative effect in their armies.138 Much to the opposite, the Greeks thought that the presence of their younger beloved would increase their motivation and desire to fight.139 In Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus imagined an ideal army that:

could be made up entirely of pairs of lovers, it is impossible to imagine a finer population. They would avoid all dishonor, and compete with one another for glory: in battle, this kind of army, though small, fighting side by side could conquer virtually the whole world. After all, a lover would sooner be seen by anyone deserting his post or throwing away his weapons, rather than by his boyfriend. He would normally choose to die many times over instead. And as for abandoning the boy, or not trying to save him if he is in danger—no-one is such a coward as not to be inspired with courage by Eros, making him the equal of the naturally brave man.140

This conception may have stemmed in part from the Spartan example, a society that focused all of its resources into creating powerful armies, and which may have also encouraged pederastic relationships in them.141 Not too long after Phaedrus's speech, myths of armies made up of male lovers began to sprang up. The most famous may have been Plutarch's legend of the

137 Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 197; Kenneth Royce Moore, Sex and the Second-Best City: Sex and Society in the Laws of Plato (New York: Routledge, 2005), 175.

138 During the Senate debate on the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, Senator McCain quoted General Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, about the potential effect that openly gay and lesbian soldiers would have serving: "On December 3rd the Committee on Armed Services heard from the Chiefs of our four military services, the Chiefs of our four military services. General Amos said 'based on what I know about the very tough fight in Afghanistan, the almost singular focus of our combat forces is a train up deploying in the theater the necessary tightly woven cloture of those combat forces that we are asking so much of it this time and finally the direct feedback from my survey is that we should not implement repeal at this time. Any talks about mistakes and inattention are direct distractions cost marines' lives, cost marines' lives. Marines come back after serving in combat and they say 'look, anything that is gonna break or potentially break that focus and cause any kind of distraction may have an effect on cohesion.'" C-Span Video Library, “Senate Session, Dec 18, 2010” 01:38:10—01:39:01, http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/SenateSession4661 (accessed August 9, 2011), transcript of video made by myself.


140 Plato Symposium 178e-179b.

141 So it is with these gymnastics and common meals: in many other ways they now benefit cities, but in the event of civil strife they are harmful...What's more, there is an ancient law concerning sexual pleasures not only of humans but of beasts, a law laid down even in nature, which this practice seems to have corrupted. For these offenses your cities (Sparta and Crete) might be the first to be accused by someone, along with other cities that zealously pursue gymnastics,” Plato's Laws 636b.
Sacred Band, a Theban army of lovers numbering three hundred, which was able to defeat powerhouses such as the Spartans only to succumb to the might of Phillip of Macedon by mid fourth century B.C.E.\textsuperscript{142}

In addition to Phaedrus, Pausanias also sang the praises of \textit{eros} between men and grown up boys, qualifying it as “purely heavenly,” and better than the “common” \textit{eros} experienced between men and women.\textsuperscript{143} Women were deemed more base than men and all about satisfying their own pleasures, incapable of the virtues of philosophy and reason which men of free standing had access to.\textsuperscript{144} The relationship of an \textit{erastēs} and an \textit{erōmenos} also symbolized freedom and democracy, as it was believed that lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton liberated Athens from tyrant Pisistratids.\textsuperscript{145} Although most Greek men seemed to have been attracted to both sexes, the male body became increasingly a symbol of beauty and sex appeal for the Greeks, whom all throughout the classical period represented more males than females in their vase paintings and sculptures.\textsuperscript{146}

And yet pederastic relationships were also highly problematic for Greek society. Although active “homosexual” sex was practiced and seen as normal, being penetrated was a sign of shame for an adult Greek man, and could even be subject for prosecution. In Dover's rendering of Aiskhines' \textit{Prosecution of Timarkhos}, the protagonist was charged for prostitution and for adopting a role unbecoming to his male status in Greek society. His questioning read:

Now, when your ancestors distinguished so firmly between shameful and honorable conduct, will you acquit Timarkhos, who is a man and male in body, but has committed a woman's transgressions? Who among you will then punish a woman caught in wrongdoing? Will it not deserve a charge of insensitivity, to deal harshly with her who

\textsuperscript{142}Leitao “Sacred Band” in Nussbaum and Sihvola, eds, \textit{The Sleep of Reason}, 143-146.
\textsuperscript{143}Plato \textit{Symposium} 181b-d.
\textsuperscript{144}Halperin, \textit{One Hundred Years}, 129-130.
\textsuperscript{145}Leitao “Sacred Band” in Nussbaum and Sihvola, eds, \textit{The Sleep of Reason}, 157; Moore, \textit{Sex and the Second-Best City}, 176-177.
\textsuperscript{146}Dover, \textit{Greek Homosexuality}, 6-9, 65.
transgresses according to nature, yet listen to the advise (in council or assembly) of him who has outraged himself contrary to nature? 147

Anal penetration was considered something so degrading, that no free Greek man in his right mind could allow it to be done to him, and even when erōmenoi were expected to play coy in their relationships with their erastēs, respectable adolescents were also expected to renounce being penetrated. 148 In ancient Greece, the sex role adopted in sexual relations mattered more than the sex of the partner, and it was supposed to reflect the person's standing in society. Penetration was supposed to be done to women, slaves and foreigners, as it was in their nature to be submissive and passive. Men's nature entailed being active, powerful, and taking the initiative. 149 As a passive adult male, the kinaidos exemplified the antithesis of a Greek hero. He transgressed his gender by letting himself be submissive to another man, and he indulged in pleasures beyond what nature prescribed. His abnormal sexuality was also a symptom of a defective physiology, whereby semen flowed to his anus instead of his penis. 150 One way Greeks got around this “bottom stigmatization” was by practicing intercrural sex. An excellent description of this act was given by Dover in the following words:

When courtship has been successful, the erastes and eromenos stand facing one another; the erastes grasps the eromenos round the torso, bows his head on to or even below the shoulder of the eromenos, bends his knees and thrusts his penis between the eromenos's thighs just below the scrotum. 151

Intercrural sex spared the erōmenos from undergoing the 'humiliation' of anal sex. It was done with both partners facing each other, thus giving the passive partner the dignity he was due, and it seemed to satisfy the erastēs.

147Ibid., 60. As a consequence of the trial, Timarkhos was banned from holding public office, addressing an assembly or entering a temple, Marilyn B. Skinner, Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 113.
148Dover, Greek Homosexuality, 103.
149Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 215-216.
150Skinner, Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture, 124-128.
151Dover, Greek Homosexuality, 98.
Another difficulty in the Greek pederastic relationships was the inherent inequality that existed between the partners, due to differences in age and power. The erastēs was the older more powerful partner, meant to be the “ugly duckling” in the relationship, and the one who was truly in love. He was the subject of love. The erōmenos, or younger partner, typically between the ages of twelve and twenty, was expected to appreciate the attentions of the erastēs, and not grant his favors too easily. He was the object of love, and was assumed to be in the relationship looking to receive gifts, attention, and an education in his passage to adulthood. This pederastic relationship centered on the education of the erōmenos was called pedagogy, and it was well embedded within Athenian society. Alcibiades illustrated it well in Plato's Symposium, when he approached Socrates to propose him a pedagogic relationship while lying naked in the same cloak:

'Socrates, are you asleep?' 'No.' 'Do you know what I've decided?' 'What?' 'I think you are the ideal person to be my lover, but you seem to be a bit shy about suggesting it. So I'll tell you how I feel about it. I think I'd be crazy not to satisfy you in this way, just as I'd do anything else for you if it was in my power—or in my friends' power. Nothing matters more to me than my own improvement, and I can't imagine a better helper than you.'

Alcibiades's education seemed to be worthy enough for the granting of his favors, and other philosophers such as the Stoics would have seen it this way as well—so long as the educating was not done only to get to the prize. But Plato's Socrates had a different take on it.

Although Plato was said to be attracted to boys, he did not have many good things to say about sex between men. According to David Halperin, Plato “mistrusted” the institution of pederasty, and this may be why Socrates's speech in Plato's Symposium reads so different from the rest of the speeches. As the master philosopher, expert on matters of love, Socrates was the

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152 Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 193-196.
153 Plato Symposium 218c-218d.
155 Halperin, One Hundred Years, 116.
only truly qualified voice in the whole gathering. In order to give his account of eros, Socrates chose to relay what was told to him by a certain prophetess named Diotima, the only female voice in the whole Symposium. Through the voice of Diotima, Socrates explained the true Platonic conception of love and sex, a conception which dovetailed nicely with Plato's metaphysics.

According to Plato's Socrates, the beauty of the beloved worked as a reminder of the form of beauty, to which the human rational soul had access before the Fall and entrapment into the human body. In this way the madness, longing, and desire excited by the beauty of the beloved were just but a glimpse into what the real form of beauty would provoke in humans, and by way of loving bodies, men could ascend to loving minds, and loving what made things beautiful, which was the form of beauty. In the words of sage Diotima:

Such is the experience of the man who approaches, or is guided towards, love in the right way, beginning with the particular examples of beauty, but always returning from them to the search for that one beauty. He uses them like a ladder, climbing from the love of one person to love of two; from two to love of all physical beauty; from physical beauty to beauty in human behavior; thence to beauty in subjects of study; from them he arrives finally at that branch of knowledge which studies nothing but ultimate beauty. Then at last he understands what true beauty is. That, if ever, is the moment, my dear Socrates, when a man's life is worth living, as he contemplates beauty itself.

Falling in-love was not problematic to Plato, as it could lead to the fulfillment of human life in the contemplation of beauty. What was problematic was what people did when in-love, as the intensity of love could lead men not to pursue it with their rational soul, but with their appetitive one for the sole enjoyment of the body. The excitement that the erastēs felt in the presence of his beloved had to be controlled by reason, because if this pleasure was not regulated, it could lead

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156 Plato Symposium 198b-199b. This was made clear by Socrates himself, when he replied to Agathon that the young Greek would not be arguing with Socrates, but with “the truth,” Plato Symposium 201c-d.
157 Ibid, 201d-e. According to Halperin, the use of Diotima by Plato to explain his philosophy of the erotic was in order to illustrate a “feminine” conception of what eros' goal should be, which according to Plato was reproduction. Halperin, One Hundred Years, 140.
159 Plato Symposium 211b-d.
to akolasia, or self-indulgence. But how could two males regulate their passion for one another with their reason? Which actions would they be advised to pursue, and which should they avoid? Before Laws, Plato was only giving hints. Socrates's example may have been just one such hint.

Plato's ethical role model, Socrates, was characterized as the ultimate philosopher who not only did the talk, but also walked the walk. What made Socrates so admirable was his capacity to forgo pleasure and endure intense physical needs. According to both Dover and Foucault, this was intrinsic to a Platonic understanding of sōphrosynē, in which the moderation of pleasures implied a reductionist approach, which consisted in sating the most basic bodily needs for the sake of surviving. This was also how Xenophon viewed Socrates, when he described him in the following terms:

He ate just sufficient food to make eating a pleasure, and he was so ready for his food that he found appetite the best sauce; and any kind of drink he found pleasant, because he drank only when he was thirsty.

In order to get to where Socrates was, one was advised to increase his desires to a boiling point of need, and then satisfy them in a minimum way. The continuous practice of micromanaging pleasures would eventually minimize the temptations, so that bodily needs would become less intense, and the effort to combating them reduced. According to Plato, reducing pleasures ultimately led men to living good lives, as:

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161 Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 167; Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 56.
162 As cited in Ibid., 57.
163 Plato encouraged drinking parties in the formation of young men with precisely this model in mind, in order to increase their desires and manage them at their height through abstinence. The Athenian Stranger put it clear in his discussion with his Cretan and Spartan counter-parts when he stated: “A man becomes perfect in courage by fighting against and conquering the cowardice within him; surely no man who lacks experience and gymnastic training in these struggles would ever attain half his potential in virtue. Can a man then become perfect in moderation if he has not fought triumphantly against the many pleasures and desires that try to seduce him into shamelessness and injustice, using the help of speech, deed, and art, in games and in serious pursuits? Can he remain inexperienced in all such things?” Plato *Laws* 647d.
Now he who knows will set down the life of moderation as a life that is mild in every way, with gentle pains and gentle pleasures, a life characterized by desires that are mild and loves that are not mad. The unrestrained life he will set down as intense in every way, with strong pains and strong pleasures, a life characterized by desires that are vehement and frenzied, and loves that are as mad as possible. In the moderate life, he will say, the pleasures predominate over the griefs, while in the unrestrained life the pains are greater and more numerous and more frequent than the pleasures. From this it falls out, necessarily and according to nature, that the one life is more pleasant for us and the other more painful; and he at least who wants to live pleasantly will no longer, voluntarily at any rate, permit himself to live in an unrestrained way.164

It is easy for the modern reader to see this philosophy as prudish and very repressive, but this was not the way Greek philosophers saw it. To them, enkrateia made men free, and akolasia symbolized men's bondage to their physical needs.165 It was very important for a man used to ruling over other people—as many Greek men were, at the very least in their own households—to be able to rule himself first. Akolasia could lead to tyrannical behavior in a ruler and was deemed unmanly. Persian king Xerxes, defeated in the battle of Marathon, was seen as a good example of this.166

On the same vein, Plato may have seen sex between men as superfluous to the sex impulse, not important for the satisfaction of any basic needs as it did not lead to the reproduction of the species. It is important to remember that Greek aphrodisia did not make distinctions on sexual orientation, and the common view was that men could choose among women and boys for their sexual partners, making it a matter of circumstantial preference. In modern parlance, this was very much a matter of choice.167 In his earlier works, Plato was already hinting at a clear-cut condemnation of all same-sex aphrodisia, without banning same-sex romantic relationships. In Plato's Symposium, Diotima—via Socrates—expressed that eros's ultimate goal was reproduction, but she was not only referring to the physical reproduction of the

164Ibid., 734a.
165Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 78-79.
166Plato Laws 695c-696d.
167Dover, Greek Homosexuality, 65.
species, but also to the reproduction of the intellect. In Diotima's words, “the activity we are talking about (love) is the use of what is beautiful for the purpose of reproduction, whether physical or mental.”\textsuperscript{168} The latter appears to have referred to the pedagogic relationships between males, which led to the formation of the \textit{erōmenos} as an adult male. A rejection of sexual activity within these relationships was almost implied in Socrates's rejection of Alcibiades's proposal. When Alcibiades seemingly offered Socrates to have a traditional pedagogic relationship of sex in exchange for education, Socrates answered in the following manner:

'My dear Alcibiades, you're certainly nobody's fool, if you're right in what you say about me, & I do have some power to improve you. It must be remarkable beauty you see in me, far superior to your own physical beauty. \textit{If that's the main aim of your deal with me, to exchange beauty for beauty, then you are trying to get much the better of the bargain.} You want to get real beauty in exchange for what is commonly mistaken for it, like Diomedes getting gold armor in return for his bronze (my emphasis).\textsuperscript{169}

Socrates's example may or may not have constituted a rejection of same-sex \textit{aphrodisia} in general. After all, Socrates was an ideal of ethical perfection, not easy to imitate. Nevertheless, Plato did seem to make himself more clear in his \textit{Republic}. In it, Socrates had an interesting exchange with Glaucon, which went as follows:

-...is there any pleasure you can name that is greater and keener than sexual pleasure?
-No; nor any that is more like frenzy.
-Whereas love rightfully is such a passion as beauty combined with a noble and harmonious character may inspire in a temperate and cultivated mind. It must therefore be kept from all contact with licentiousness and frenzy; and where a passion of this rightful sort exists, the lover and his beloved must have nothing to do with the pleasure in question.
-Certainly not, Socrates.
-It appears, then, that in this commonwealth we are founding you will have a law to the effect that a lover may seek the company of his beloved and, with his consent, kiss and embrace him like a son, with honorable intent, but must never be suspected of any further familiarity, on pain of being thought ill-bred and without any delicacy of feeling.\textsuperscript{170}

True beauty seemed to leave out all sexual activity between lover and beloved, and Plato seemed
to imply a need for a law that forbade such contact.

The Birth of Sex Against Nature

Notwithstanding former timidities, Plato's value judgments on same-sex sexual relations did come later—and stronger—in his lifetime. Right at the beginning of Laws, Plato—via the Athenian Stranger—referred to “males coming together with males, and females with females” as “against nature” and stemming from “a lack of self-restraint with regard to pleasure.” This position was affirmed, confirmed and reaffirmed all throughout the Laws. In setting up the laws regarding sexual conduct in his utopian Magnesian state, Plato—through his Athenian Stranger, Cretan, and Spartan interlocutors—stated his general theoretical position on sex:

that in regard to this law I had an art that would promote the natural use of sexual intercourse for the production of children—by abstaining on the one hand from intercourse with males, the deliberate killing of the human race, as well as from the wasting of sperm on rocks or stones where it will never take root and generate a natural offspring, and on the other hand by abstaining from any female field in which you wouldn't wish your sperm to grow. If this law becomes permanent and hold sway (if it were justly victorious in the other cases, as it is now in regard to intercourse on the part of parents), tens of thousands of good things would result. For in the first place it is laid down according to nature; then too, it will prevent erotic frenzy and madness, as well as all adulteries, and all excessive drinking and eating, and will make men familiar with and dear to their own wives.

He continued emphasizing an exclusive “heterosexual” eros by stating:

I assert that the only thing left for our custom to do is to plunge on, saying that our citizens must not be inferior to the birds and many of the other beasts, who are born amid great flocks and live celibate, pure, and chaste, until the time of child-rearing; then when they arrive at this age they pair off, male with female according to preference, and female with male, and live out the rest of their lives in pious and just fashion, remaining steadfast to the first agreements of friendship. Now surely they ought to be superior to the beasts, at least! But if they become corrupted by the other Greeks and most of the barbarians, by seeing among themselves and hearing about the very great power of the so-called “disorderly Aphrodite,” and so are incapable of mastering it, then the Guardians of the Laws, becoming lawgivers, will have to devise for them a second law.

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171 *Laws* is thought to be Plato's latest work.
172 Plato *Laws* 636c.
173 Ibid., 838e-839b.
174 Ibid., 840d-e.
And finally, he specified the law by giving two options, not without noting the difficulty of enforcing them:

But maybe, if a god would be willing, we could enforce one of two ordinances regarding erotic matters: Either no one is to dare to touch any well-born and free person except the woman who is his wife, and no one is to sow unhallowed, bastard sperm in concubines or go against nature and sow sterile seed in males; or we should abolish erotic activity between males altogether.\(^{175}\)

Some of the expressions stated above will be seen over and over again in the history of western discourses regarding sex, and this obviously speaks to the ascendancy that Plato has had in our western culture. However, the passages above also seem to reveal the reasons that Plato had in mind, in his time, for disliking so emphatically same-sex relations. 1) Same-sex intercourse was in and of itself an expression of self-indulgence, as it went beyond the minimum requirement of bodily satisfaction for the survival of the human species, which was reproductive sex between men and women. Plato made this point evident in the first of the three paragraphs cited, where he declared a law that would have only allowed sex “for the production of children,” banning same-sex relations, masturbation, and even sex with 'questionable' women. 2) Plato may have also wanted to divorce sexual intercourse from lustful romantic relationships, as regulating sex “for the production of children” prevented “erotic frenzy and madness, as well as all adulteries, and all excessive drinking and eating.” This idea may have followed from the Republic, where he imagined a society with a type of “sexual communism,” where the common good was put before intense romantic loyalties.\(^{176}\) Although intense pederastic relationships like the one had by Harmodius and Aristogeiton could free a society from a tyrant, they could also destroy one if they were based on ungodly motives. 3) Even when Plato did not pay much attention to nature, he could still see in it God's design manifested in his creation. In this way, he

\(^{175}\) Ibid., 841d.
found evidence of an ordered design in animal behavior, where “the birds and many of the other beasts...live celibate, pure, and chaste, until the time of child-rearing...when they pair off, male with female...and live out the rest of their lives in pious and just fashion.” This behavior produced a baseline for humans, whose same-sex behaviors represented a “disorder,” or a contradiction to the design.

In addition to these, Plato may have also been influenced by some of the negative social connotations that were attached to pederastic relations, as in the subversion of the gender of the erōmenos, and the intrinsically unequal partnership of an erastēs bent on his bodily satisfaction at the expense of the erōmenos. Also, often men reserved all of their romantic feelings for their younger male companions, disregarding their wives at home; thus banning all homosexual activity could have the effect of making “men familiar with and dear to their own wives.” This last point would be echoed by Roman Stoics centuries later.

Notwithstanding all of this overwhelming evidence about Plato's distaste of same-sex sexual relations, we would still be well advised to establish some caveats. When Plato referred to erotic relationships between men as unnatural, he only meant the sex part. He saw same-sex desire as perfectly natural, and same-sex relationships of philiā, chaste and aimed to the contemplation of the good, as the ideal. Moreover, Plato's opinions on sex were greatly out of

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177 Presumably we use the term 'friend' to characterize the relationship between similars in point of virtue, and also the relationship between equals; then again, the term 'friend' also characterizes the needy in its relationship to the wealthy, where they are opposite in kind. And when either of these becomes vehement, we name it 'erotic love'...Now the friendship between opposites is terrible and savage, and is seldom mutual among us, while the friendship between those who are similar is gentle and mutual throughout life...For the man who loves the body, hungering for the bloom as for ripe fruit, bids himself take his fill without honoring the disposition of soul of the beloved. The other sort of lover holds the desire for the body to be secondary; looking at it rather than loving it...” Plato Laws 837a-837c.

178 Regarding Greek views on the 'naturalness' of same-sex desire, Foucault expressed: “The Greeks could not imagine that a man might need a different nature—an 'other' nature—in order to love a man; but they were inclined to think that the pleasures one enjoyed in such a relationship ought to be given an ethical form different from the one that was required when it came to loving a woman. In this sort of relation, the pleasures did not reveal an alien nature in the person who experienced them; but their use demanded a special stylistics.” Foucault, Use of Pleasures, 192; Moore, Sex and the Second-Best City, 185-186, 193.
A more accurate portrayal of mainstream Greek views on pleasure may have been that of Aristophanes as it appears in *Clouds*:

> Just consider, my young friend, everything that's involved in being 'good' (sōphronein), and all the pleasures you're going to miss; boys, women, kottabos-games, good food, drinks, laughs. But what's the point of living, if you're done out of all that?\(^{179}\)

Although Plato's *Laws* seem to condemn same-sex sexual activity for everyone, it should not be forgotten that Plato's state of Magnesia was a utopian state, an exercise of the imagination based not on reality, but on idealized conditions, and Plato constantly recognized the difficulties of imposing his laws at every step in his dialogues.\(^{181}\) Moreover, there is also the difficult question of assessing the role that the many different interlocutors play in Plato's works, and how Plato uses them. For instance, recent scholarship argues against always assuming Socrates to be a mouthpiece of Plato, as he never claimed to have had knowledge of the form of the good, and was made to express fallacious arguments from time to time.\(^{182}\) Whatever the case may be, Plato's central interlocutors and Socrates have often been assumed to have spoken Plato's words, which were taken very seriously later on, and by societies less friendly to same-sex *aphrodisia*, and more eager to impose universal laws on sexual mores.

Although Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus all partook in the basic premises of *enkrateia* and *sōphrosynē*, Plato may have been the first and one of the few among the Greeks to come up with such restrictive *laws* against same-sex relationships within the context of his

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\(^{179}\) Ibid., 181, 193.

\(^{180}\) As cited in Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 136.

\(^{181}\) Magnesia was not the first of these ideal states, as Plato had already introduced Callipolis in his *Republic*, another utopian exercise of his imagination. Interestingly, Donald Morrison has argued that what Plato may have intended as the best possible state was not Callipolis, but the first and more simple “City of Pigs” which he introduced in Book 2. Donald R. Morrison “The Utopian Character of Plato's Ideal City,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, 252.

Socratic ethics. Even when Aristotle wrote—in one of the few writings that we from him concerning sex—about same-sex relations as going against nature, he is believed to have referred to the specific case of the adult *kinaiados*, and his predilection for assuming the passive role in sexual relationships.\(^{183}\) Epicurus was more vague in his statements about “securing health of body and tranquility of mind,” not wanting to go into specifics, and Socrates, according to how he was used by Plato, could either be an old man madly in love with boys, or an apathetic nonsexual wise man.\(^{184}\) Nevertheless, Plato's legacy concerning sexual ethics would be the one which ultimately resonated the most to Roman ears, as they absorbed the Greek philosophical tradition.

\(^{183}\) Aristotle referred to the latter in his *Nicomachean Ethics* as having an incontinence, resulting from a diseased nature or from habit, as “those who have suffered wanton (sexual) assault since their childhood,” Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1148b; Sihvola “Aristotle on Sex and Love” in Nussbaum and Sihvola, eds, *The Sleep of Reason*, 217; Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 133; Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 169.

\(^{184}\) Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 10.126-128; Plato *Charmides* 155c-d as quoted in Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 155; Plato *Symposium* 219c-220c.
CHAPTER III
STOICISM AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

By 150 B.C.E., Rome had finalized the conquest of its Greek territories in the Macedonian Wars. The war against the Greeks was part of a greater conflict that Rome sustained with its arch-rival Carthage during the Punic Wars, a conflict which launched Rome on its way to become the mighty Empire that stretched throughout the Mediterranean, dominating all lands adjacent to it. As a result of the Macedonian Wars and the closer contact that ensued from the incorporation of the Greek territories into the fabric of the Empire, Roman aristocrats developed an obsession for 'all things Greek,' importing Greek art, architecture, literature and philosophy to Rome. Five Greek schools of philosophy soon developed and thrived in the Roman landscape, influencing the way the Roman aristocracy thought of the world around them and of themselves during the first centuries of our common era. These schools were Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, Skepticism and Platonism, and although all seemed to have had a degree of influence in Roman society, Stoicism seemed to be the most influential for the upper classes during the early empire.

The Stoic school was founded by Zeno in Athens, in the Hellenistic post-Aristotelian period of the third century B.C.E, and was continued by Chrysippus and Cleanthes, among

\[^{185}\text{Livy The History of Rome From Its Foundation} 40.\]
\[^{186}\text{Paul Veyne may have used hyperbole when he stated that “Rome was a people whose culture was that of another people, Greece,” but the underlying spirit of the sentence seemed to apply, Paul Veyne, Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry, and the West, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 16.}\]
This early Stoicism, although original in itself, continued many of the ideas that Plato and Aristotle had expounded in their physics and metaphysics, and had a marked Socratic influence in its ethics. The Stoics also continued the Platonic and Aristotelian use of teleology, which entailed understanding that there was sympathy between the cosmos and human behavior.

The Stoics believed in an original substance of the universe called *ousia*, which was creative fire. This substance had active (soul or *pneuma*) and passive (matter or *hylē*) principles which enabled it to act on itself. Seneca talked about these in terms of cause and matter, explaining that:

Matter lies inert and inactive, a substance with unlimited potential, but destined to remain idle if no one sets it in motion; and it is cause (this meaning the same as reason) which turns matter to whatever end it wishes and fashions it into a variety of different products.

The creative fire did this fashioning through its *pneuma*—or active principle—in a process similar to condensation and rarefication, forming planet Earth along with the rest of the cosmos. Like Aristotle, the Stoics also believed that there was a sub-lunar realm where the Earth stood, with the planets and the sun above in a supra-lunar realm. *Pneuma* was dispersed throughout the supra-lunar realm, enabling the planets to rotate in regular motions.

Like Aristotle, the Stoics thought that there were no voids in the universe, and that every seemingly empty space was filled with *pneuma* or divine soul. Zeus, one of the classical Greek deities, was himself this *pneuma*, acting on matter to create the universe and filling every void of

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190 *Seneca Letters to Lucilius* 65.
191 “The world, they hold, comes into being when its substance has first been converted from fire through air into moisture and then the coarser part of the moisture has condensed as earth, while that whose particles are fine has been turned into air, and this process of rarefication goes on increasing till it generates fire,” Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.142-143.
192 Ibid. 7.135-138; Todd “Monism and Immanence,” 145-152.
193 Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.139-141.
the cosmos, causing the motion of every planet through tension. In this way, Zeus was immanent, or omnipresent.\(^{194}\) In addition to his immanence, God was also thought to be omnipotent and omniscient, causing everything that happened in the universe, and being able to know the inner thoughts of his human population.\(^{195}\) According to Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, God was responsible for all the living things, creating unmovable things like rocks (\textit{hexis}), things that could move and grow like plants (\textit{physis}), animals with capacity for mental images (\textit{psychē}), and animals with capacity for reason like humans (\textit{nous}).\(^{196}\) This Stoic God was indeed different with respect to his Platonic Demiurge and Aristotelian Prime Mover predecessors. Unlike the Demiurge, God was both material and spiritual, being intrinsic in the material universe, and unlike the Prime Mover, God was directly involved in everything that happened in the universe.

The Stoics also believed in an everlasting recurrence of the universe. Time evolved from the creation of the universe to the world conflagration, which according to the Stoics was a time when the creative fire turned into a destructive one, consuming all of its creation. However, the world did not end just then, as out of the total destruction a process of creation ensued, with another cosmos as its outcome. The ‘new’ cosmos would in fact be the same as older ones, with the same events happening at the same time and in the same sequence.\(^{197}\) Nothing changed from one cosmos to the next, and humans had no recollection of what previous times looked like; thus they could not anticipate the future. Marcus Aurelius referred to this phenomenon when he stated that:

\begin{quote}
all things from time everlasting have been cast in the same mould and repeated cycle after
\end{quote}

\(^{194}\)\textit{(God) is, however, the artificer of the universe and, as it were, the father of all, both in general and in that particular part of him which is all-pervading, and which is called many names according to its various powers,} Ibid, 7.146-147; Michael Lapidge “Stoic Cosmology,” in \textit{The Stoics}, 170.

\(^{195}\)\textit{God is near you, is with you, is inside you,} Seneca \textit{Letters to Lucilius} 41.

\(^{196}\)Lapidge “Stoic Cosmology,” 171. Although Philo is often identified as a Middle-Platonist, he embraced Stoic ideas such as the divine immanence; however, Philo considered the divine immanence to be a manifestation of God and not God himself. More on Philo on Chapter 4.

\(^{197}\)Long, \textit{From Epicurus to Epictetus}, 263, 280-81.
cycle, and so it makes no difference whether a man see the same things recur through a
hundred years or two hundred, or through eternity...\textsuperscript{198}

The confluence between immanence and everlasting recurrence gave the Stoic philosophy
a strong determinism, which is still one of the aspects for which this school is most known. Since
Zeus decided everything, and as events that would occur had already occurred, humans could not
control what would come their way. However, and unlike any other living organism in the
cosmos, human beings could determine their own decisions and were still responsible for their
outcomes.\textsuperscript{199} This particularity of the human species was due to the notion that they possessed
part of the divine rational substance in their minds (\textit{nous}). In this way, people had part of God
within themselves, which allowed them to be owners of their own bodies, and responsible for its
actions.\textsuperscript{200} According to the Stoics, the human body was filled with \textit{pneuma}, which constituted
its soul or inner breath. This \textit{pneuma} circulated throughout the body touching upon eight main
centers, these being the five senses, the reproductive organs, speech, and a central command,
which was thought to be in the heart. The \textit{pneuma} concentrated in the heart formed the human
mind, which animated the body from this location operating on the same principle of tension
with which the rest of the cosmos operated. In this way, God controlled the universe in the same
way as the mind controlled the human body.\textsuperscript{201}

Unlike Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics could not conceive the human soul as having any
irrational parts, as it was a part of the divine soul of the world, which permeated every empty gap
and gave the cosmos its order and rationality.\textsuperscript{202} To say that the human soul was partly irrational
was no less than saying that God was partly irrational as well. Notwithstanding, the Stoics did recognize that human beings could commit irrational behaviors, but to them, these behaviors were not expressions of the rational soul. According to the Stoics all behaviors stemmed from the judgment of cognitive impressions, which humans were free to make as part of the self-autonomy that they were given by God, which enabled them to act according to their own decisions. Human beings were constantly bombarded by impressions from the world, or phantasia, but unlike the other non-rational animals, they could either assent—or not—to these impressions. Wrong-doing stemmed from assenting to false impressions, or impressions that were not beneficial to the human being. Thus Marcus Aurelius stated:

To the stand-bys (sic) mentioned add yet another, that a definition or delineation should be made of every object that presents itself, so that we may see what sort of thing it is in its essence...

The incorrect judgment of an impression produced passion (pathē), which disturbed the regular motions of the human soul. The key to true happiness consisted on keeping a healthy and balanced soul, undisturbed by passions, and this goal was only achieved through the constant correct assenting to the impressions. This ultimate state of undisturbed happiness was what Stoics called apatheia, and it was not too different from the old Socratic enkrateia, or the Epicurean ataraxia. It consisted more on managing emotions rather than in getting rid of them,

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203 Now, from falsehood there results perversion, which extends to the mind; and from this perversion arise many passions or emotions, which are causes of instability,” Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers 7.110-112.

204 A presentation (or mental impression) is an imprint on the soul: the name having been appropriately borrowed from the imprint made by the seal upon the wax,” Ibid, 7.43-46; Strange, “The Stoics on the Voluntariness of the Passions,” 35, 48-49; Long, From Epicurus to Epictetus, 384; A.C.Lloyd “Emotion and Decision in Stoic Psychology,” in The Stoics, 239; Reydams-Schills, Roman Stoics, 26.

205 Marcus Aurelius Meditations 3. 11.

206 The Stoics believed that the principles of the universe, or natural law, applied to both the human body and soul, and since according to Greek medicine disease stemmed from an imbalance of the bodily humors, the Stoics considered that emotional disturbances could also cause disease in the soul, which was manifested in a disruption of the regular motions of the soul, thus Diogenes Laertius stated “Passion, or emotion, is defined by Zeno as an irrational and unnatural movement in the soul, or again as impulse in excess,” Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers 7.110-112; Michel Foucault, The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1986), 54-58; Strange “The Stoics on the Voluntariness of the Passions,” 37.
by understanding their source and nature, according to reason.\textsuperscript{207}

Indeed, it would have been impossible to get rid of all of the impressions received from the world, as these were externals that people could not control. The only thing that a person could control was the way he reacted to these stimuli, and this was an area which the Stoics emphasized. Thus Epictetus stated:

There are things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power. Within our power are opinion, aim, desire, aversion, and, in one word, whatever affairs are our own. Beyond our power are body, property, reputation, office, and, in one word, whatever are not properly our own affairs...Seek at once, therefore, to be able to say to every unpleasant semblance, “You are but a semblance and by no means the real thing.” And then examine it by those rules which you have; and first and chiefly by this: whether it concerns the things which are within our power or those which are not; and if it concerns anything beyond our power, be prepared to say that it is nothing to you.\textsuperscript{208}

For the Stoics, 'happiness' was truly 'a state of mind.' No matter what happened to the life of the individual, what was important was how he reacted. This view was ultimately what freed Stoics from their harsh determinism, and what might have made Stoic philosophy so appealing to its audiences, as it promised to free men from fear and longing.

However, giving less importance to externals was but just one way in which the Stoic initiate could live a good life. As important was being able to distinguish the good impressions from the bad ones, in order to assent to things that would not disturb the soul. A Stoic could find his measuring stick on whether actions were in accordance with nature, or against nature:

This is why Zeno was the first (in his treatise \textit{On the Nature of Man}) to designate as the end “life in agreement with nature” (or living agreeably to nature), which is the same as a virtuous life, virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us...Again, living virtuously is equivalent to living in accordance with experience with the actual course of nature, as Chrysippus says in the first book of his \textit{De finibus}; for our individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe. And this is why the end may be defined as

\textsuperscript{207}John M. Rist “The Stoic Concept of Detachment,” in \textit{The Stoics}, 259-60. This was slightly different from the Epicurean \textit{ataraxia}, since unlike the latter, it did not dispense entirely of passions, Seneca explained it thus: “the difference here between the Epicurean and our own school is this: our wise man feels his troubles but overcomes them, while their wise man does not even feel them.” Seneca \textit{Letters to Lucilius} 9.

\textsuperscript{208}Epictetus \textit{The Enchiridion} 1.
life in accordance with nature, or, in other words, in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe, a life in which we refrain from every action forbidden by the law common to all things, that is to say, the right reason which pervades all things, and is identical with this Zeus, lord and ruler of all that is. And this very thing constitutes the virtue of the happy man and the smooth current of life, when all actions promote the harmony of the spirit dwelling in the individual man with the will of him who orders the universe.  

Again, just like in Plato and Aristotle, doing things according to nature meant doing things according to the principles with which the world was designed and operated, and it also meant fulfilling the human role in the world. But the Stoics may have gone even further in their conception of nature, in that to them God was the natural laws, as the divine soul intrinsic in the matter and immanent in the cosmos. In this way, doing something against nature also meant doing something against God's laws. But, if following nature was so important, then what did they mean by nature?

The Roman Stoics and Natural Law

Seneca stated that:

For man is a rational animal. Man's ideal state is realized when he has fulfilled the purpose for which he was born. And what is it that reason demands of him? Something very easy—that he live in accordance with his own nature.

What Seneca and the Roman Stoics meant by natural law as applied to human ethics would not have sounded extraneous to Socrates, as the Romans fully incorporated the “Socratic persona” into their ethics. Epictetus did not hide his devotion to Socrates when he admonished an initiate that “Socrates became perfect, improving himself by everything, following reason alone.

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210“Is no one, by the agency of reason and proof, capable of learning that God has created everything in the world, and has made the world as a whole unimpeded and perfect but its parts instrumental to the whole? All other creatures have been excluded from the ability to understand the world's government; but the rational animal has capacities for reasoning out the following things—that he is a part and what sort of a part he is, and that it is good for the parts to yield to the whole.” Epictetus Discourses 4.7.6-7, as quoted in Long, Epictetus, 155.
211Seneca Letters to Lucilius 41.
212As a matter of fact, the Roman Stoics focused almost entirely on ethics, disregarding physics and logic, and their ethical role model was not Zeno, but Socrates, Reydams-Schills, Roman Stoics, 3, 8.
And though you are not yet Socrates, you ought, however, to live as one seeking to be a Socrates." The Socrates the Romans admired was the *enkratos* presented by Plato and Xenophon, able to make do with the *minimum* satisfaction of his bodily needs in order to survive. The Roman Stoics took it upon themselves to follow his example, and they did this through abstinence exercises, popular also in the Epicurean camp. In this way, Seneca recommended Lucilius to:

> Set aside now and then a number of days during which you will be content with the plainest of food, and very little of it, and with rough, coarse clothing...Endure all of this for three or four days at a time, sometimes more, so that it is a genuine trial and not an amusement.

The abstinence exercises were not only good for keeping pleasures at bay while reducing desire, but also for getting ready for life's unpredictable external circumstances; thus Seneca admonished:

> It is in times of security that the spirit should be preparing itself to deal with difficult times; while fortune is bestowing favors on it then is the time for it to be strengthened against her rebuffs....If you want a man to keep his head when the crisis comes you must give him some training before it comes.

Training in reducing desires and keeping pleasures at a minimum enabled the Stoic sage to be in control of his mind and body, being in a stronger position to face what destiny had in store for him. Living abstemiously also meant living according to nature, not depending on any luxuries but only on what nature could provide, and therefore, living according to God's laws.

But the Roman Stoic meaning of “living according to nature” also had political and

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214 Long, *Epictetus*, 68. Although in this regard they needn't look much farther than their own founding father Zeno, as he “showed the utmost endurance, and the greatest frugality; the food he used required no fire to dress, and the cloak he wore was thin. Hence it was said of him: The cold of winter and the ceaseless rain. Come powerless against him: weak the dart. Of the fierce summer sun or racking pain. To bend that iron frame. He stands apart. Unspoiled by public feast and jollity: Patient, unwearied night and day doth he. Cling to his studies of philosophy,” Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7. 28-30.
215 Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 59.
217 Ibid.
cultural connotations. In several letters, Seneca complained about the luxuries of the modern Roman life-style, and praised the simple life of past times, when the wealth from war booty and territorial conquest had not yet corrupted the Roman citizenry.\textsuperscript{218} Following the philosophical tradition of social criticism from Socrates and Plato, the Roman Stoics distanced themselves from the masses and repudiated modern luxuries, but they were also careful not to go too far in their observations. Truly, the Romans threaded the needle very carefully, with a 'middle of the road' approach which was evidenced in their introduction of the concepts of self and integrity.\textsuperscript{219} Self was what earlier Stoics called \textit{nous}, or mind, which consisted in the concentration of \textit{pneuma} in the heart that acted as the rational central command for the animation of the body.\textsuperscript{220} The Roman \textit{self}, in addition, served as an inner voice of reason—a voice of conscience—that enabled someone to always aim to ethical perfection; however, this self had to also take into account tradition and social circumstances.\textsuperscript{221} Seneca put it best when he told Lucilius “imagine what the reaction would be if we started disassociating ourselves from the conventions of society. Inwardly everything should be different but our outward face should conform with the crowd.” The concept of \textit{integrity} addressed this outward conformity. It encouraged people to fulfill their roles in society without questioning, acknowledging that fate made people what they were, and that there was no point in fighting against one's lot. The best analogy for this came from Epictetus:

Remember that you are an actor in a drama of such sort as the Author chooses—if short, then in a short one; if long, then in a long one. If it be his pleasure that you should enact a

\textsuperscript{218}In Letter 86 to Lucilius, Seneca lovingly described his visit to Scipio Africanus's house, praising its simplicity and contrasting it with the modern luxuries of the buildings in the Rome of his time.

\textsuperscript{219}The standard which I accept is this: one's life should be a compromise between the ideal and the popular morality. People should admire our way of life but they should at the same time find it understandable.” Seneca \textit{Letters to Lucilius} 5.

\textsuperscript{220}By ruling part of the soul is meant that which is most truly soul proper, in which arise presentations and impulses and from which issues rational speech. And it has its seat in the heart,” Diogenes Laertius \textit{Lives of Eminent Philosophers} 7. 158-160.

poor man, or a cripple, or a ruler, or a private citizen, see that you act it well. For this is your business—to act well the given part, but to choose it belongs to another.  

It was in the self where Roman Stoics could find the freedom to pursue ethical perfection, but they were still required to keep an outward compliance to their role in society through integrity. This conception led to an inner-driven philosophy, which considered intentions as much as actions.

The self thus became a mediator between philosophy and tradition, and Stoic philosophers began to focus more on their thoughts, practicing what they called *meditations*, which were conversations that Romans carried within themselves. As an all pervading deity, God not only knew what every human did, but also what every human thought. Ethical perfection could not only be achieved by doing well, as one was expected to also think well. The best example of these inner conversations was Emperor Marcus Aurelius's most famous work, called *Meditations*. In it, the Roman Emperor stressed the importance of fulfilling his role without letting externals distract him, the importance of following nature, while also demonstrating his awareness of Stoic cosmology and its intricacy with ethics. The meditations coupled with the abstinence exercises formed what Foucault called an ethic of the “care of the self,” which consisted of training one's body to prepare for bad fate, and one's mind by constantly judging what one did and thought during his day.

This adherence to the Socratic ethics of abstention was also manifested in the way Roman aristocrats viewed sex. Here their departure from the Greek Stoics was more marked, as they chose to follow Plato's condemnations of same-sex relations rather than adhering to the more

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222 Epictetus *The Enchiridion* 17.
223 The Greek Stoics had also emphasized intentions, but they were less adamant in their adherence to societal mores.
224 Reydams-Schills, *Roman Stoics*, 1, 9, 19.
225 Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 51; Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 2.9, 2.17, 5.8.
226 Foucault quoted an example given by Seneca of a Roman Stoic named Sextius. He would question himself late at night “What bad habit have you cured today? What fault have you resisted? In what respect are you better?” Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 43, 59-61.
Roman Sexuality

Although heirs to Greek Stoic conceptions of physics, ethics and logic, the Roman Stoics differed from their Greek predecessors in some of their views concerning sex, more particularly same-sex relations. The Greek Stoics distinguished between what they deemed good *eros*, and bad *eros*. Stemming from the primacy that they gave to the human soul, good *eros* entailed relationships aimed toward friendship and the development of virtue, while bad *eros* was solely aimed toward sating bodily pleasures.\(^{227}\) So far so good, as this was a similar conception of *eros* to that of Plato's Socrates; however, the Greek Stoic view accommodated certain differences as well. Whereas Plato's Socrates considered that passionate love was the best kind, since it enabled the lover to appreciate the form of beauty, the Greek Stoics preferred the kind of love that was non-passionate and mild, deeming all passion—*pathē*—contrary to the motions of the rational soul, or *apatheia*.\(^ {228}\) Moreover, Plato and the Stoics also seemed to differ about the degree to which sexual satisfaction could be allowed. Plato did not seem to tolerate any kind of pleasure that was beyond the 'natural kind,' which he considered to be only sex for procreation between men and women. On the other hand, the Greek Stoics did not seem to have any problems with pleasurable sex of any kind, so long as it was practiced not for pleasure's sake, but in order to develop a relationship that led to virtue.\(^ {229}\)

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228 In Plato: “‘False is the tale’ that when a lover is at hand favour ought rather to be accorded to one who does not love, on the ground that the former is mad, and the latter sound of mind. That would be right if it were an invariable truth that madness is an evil: but in reality, the greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven-sent.” Plato *Phaedrus* 244a-b (also see discussion in former chapter of Plato's theory of love and the form of beauty); on the other hand, the Stoics expressed: “The passion of love is a craving from which good men are free; for it is an effort to win affection due to the visible presence of beauty,” Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.112-114; Nussbaum, “Eros and Ethical Norms,” 85.

229 Diogenes Laertius told the story of how Zeno was “enamoured of Chremonides, as he and Cleanthes were sitting beside the youth, he got up, and upon Cleanthes expressing surprise, 'Good physicians tell us,' said he, 'that the best
What both Plato and the Greek Stoics did have in common was their focus on the pederastic relationship. Notwithstanding his strong distaste of sexual relationships between men, Plato still considered the *eros* experienced between the *erastēs* and the *erōmenos*—when chaste—to be the highest form of love. Like Plato, Zeno also addressed his views of *eros* to relationships between men and boys.\(^\text{230}\) This disregard for opposite sex relationships may have stemmed from the idea that they could not lead to virtue, since women by their very nature could not achieve *enkrateia* and be recipients of philosophy.\(^\text{231}\) In a Greek Stoic pederastic relationship, the *erastēs* groomed his *erōmenos* in the practice of virtue, and their relationship could extend well beyond the commonly set limit of adulthood. After the time of courtship and mentorship, both *erastēs* and *erōmenos* evolved into a more egalitarian friendship, enjoying the fruits of the education of the younger partner.\(^\text{232}\) These Stoic pederastic relationships were different from the mainstream in that they were to be consensual, mutual to a degree in their affection, and with

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\(^{231}\) Protogenes, defender of the love of boys, expressed that “there normally exists in men and women a need for the pleasure derived from each other; but when the impulse that drives us to this goal is so vigorous and powerful that it becomes torrential and almost out of control, it is a mistake to give the name Love to it. Love, in fact, it is that attaches himself to a young and talented soul and through friendship brings it to a state of virtue; but the appetite for women we are speaking of, however well it turns out, has for net gain only an accrual of pleasure in the enjoyment of a ripe physical beauty,” Plutarch *Dialogue On Love* 4 in *Moralia* 750d; Reydams-Schills, *Roman Stoics*, 155.

\(^{232}\) Price “Plato, Zeno, and the Object of Love,” 187-189. The Stoics were known to extend their love bond with their *erōmenos* until they reached 28 years of age, which made them susceptible to some criticism. Seneca questioned “Is it not living unnaturally to aim at imparting the bloom of youth to a different period of life—can there be a sorrier of crueller (sic) practice than that whereby a boy is never, apparently, allowed to grow up into a man, in order that he may endure a man's attention for as long as may be? Won't even his years rescue him from the indignity his sex ought to have precluded?” *Letters to Lucilius* 122; however Seneca does not give us a proper age limit, completely dismissing the point as non important in his next letter “...Well, here's a question for discussion: up to what age is it proper to love young men?’ This sort of thing may be all right for the Greeks, but the kind of talk to which we would be better to turn our ears is this: ‘No man's good by accident. Virtue has to be learnt. Pleasure is a poor and petty thing...,” *Letters to Lucilius* 123.
intercrural sex as part of what the Stoics deemed 'good eros.' Theirs was a manly love, with a manly erōmenos whose countenance be pure; his brow not relaxed; his eye not wide open nor half-closed; his neck not thrown back, nor the limbs of his body relaxed, but keyed up like strings under tension; his ear cocked for the logos; and his bearing and movement giving no hope to the licentious (with) a manly look flower(ing) upon him.

The Roman Stoics would be less forgiving toward male same-sex relations. This stance may have been due in part to their adherence to Plato's Socrates as a model of ethical behavior. Nevertheless, the Roman Stoics may have also mirrored Roman attitudes regarding sex, which were different from the Greeks. Roman conceptions of the conjugal relationship and the role of women in society were also different, and may have influenced the diminished role that same-sex relations played in Roman society.

Boswell gave us a memorable citation from Edward Gibbon which may well reflect Roman views on same-sex pleasures. Gibbon stated that “of the first fifteen emperors Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct,” to which Boswell added that Claudius was the only “heterosexual” one. Well known was the story of Emperor Hadrian and his beloved Antinous, who tragically died, drowning in the Nile in one of Hadrian's expeditions. The love interest of the emperor was celebrated throughout the Mediterranean with statues and ceremonies, and this did not seem to cause much surprise. Indeed, Roman ideas of male same-sex relationships seemed to have been very similar to Greece's and to many other pre modern societies. Sex reflected social status, and the sex role of the partners was more important than

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233 The erōmenos was still not expected to fall in love, but the erastēs had a responsibility in not exploiting or using his erōmenos, Nussbaum, “Eros and Ethical Norms,” 80.
235 Boswell, CSTM, 61. This statement should not be taken too literal, as Roman historians had a tendency for smearing powerful politicians through a negative propaganda of their sexual conduct, which may or may not have reflected reality, Skinner, Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture, 240-242.
236 Antinous was even deified and made into a mystery religion, for more references see Boswell, CSTM, 84-85; Paul Veyne “Roman Homosexuality in Ancient Rome,” in Philippe Ariès and André Béjin, eds, Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times, trans. Anthony Forster (New York: Sterling Publishing, 1997), 28.
their respective biological sexes. Restrictions within these relationships also seemed to have been similar, with Romans harshly disapproving passivity in adult males.\textsuperscript{237} But the Romans may have gone even farther on this point. The \textit{Lex Scantinia}, passed in 149 B.C.E., aimed to protect free-born Roman boys from being penetrated, punishing their active male partner. Whereas in Greece there was no formal law protecting Greek minors, Roman minors were completely off-limits, leaving the Roman older partner with limited choices.\textsuperscript{238} This problematization of the sex role of the younger Roman ultimately brought the same concerns to Roman philosophers as to their Greek predecessors, which were manifested on what Foucault called the question of \textit{charis}, or mutual consent.\textsuperscript{239} This dilemma was presented by Daphnaeus in his defense of opposite-sex love:

\begin{quote}
But to consort with males (whether without consent, in which case it involves violence and brigandage; or if with consent, there is still weakness and effeminacy on the part of those who, contrary to nature, allow themselves \textit{in Plato's words} “to be covered and mounted like cattle”)—this is a completely ill-favoured favour, indecent, an unlovely affront to Aphrodite (my emphases).\textsuperscript{240}
\end{quote}

There was simply no way in which a Roman could consent to being penetrated, since just as in Greece, this sexual position was considered humiliating and unbecoming of a citizen. If the younger Roman enjoyed being penetrated and consented to it, he was considered to do so from a diseased condition.\textsuperscript{241} Hence, these relationships—if they had a penetrative sexual component—were by definition non-consensual.

\textsuperscript{237}The Latin term for the Roman passive adult male was \textit{cinaedus}, similar to the Greek \textit{kinaidos}, but the Romans also used it to refer to other “deviant” sexual conduct such as performing oral sex on men and women. The term was also used derogatively to refer to any traits that were gender deviant or fell short of the ideal masculinity of the \textit{vir}, Skinner, \textit{Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture}, 212-213.

\textsuperscript{238}In Greece the penetration of the free-born was not against the law, but family members of the passive partner could take matters into their hands under \textit{hybris}, Skinner, \textit{Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture}, 13; Paul Veyne “Roman Homosexuality in Ancient Rome,”\textsuperscript{29} Foucault, \textit{Care of the Self}, 190; Thomas A. J. McGinn, \textit{Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 140-141.

\textsuperscript{239}Foucault, \textit{Care of the Self}, 206.

\textsuperscript{240}Plutarch \textit{Dialogue On Love} 5 in \textit{Moralia} 751d-e.

\textsuperscript{241}Skinner, \textit{Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture}, 213.
But how could Romans still consider male same-sex relationships normal when they problematized them so much? The answer lies in the Roman slaves. More plentiful than in Greece, slaves provided a loophole, as their only function was to satisfy their master.242 In Veyne's citation of Seneca the Elder, “for a man born free, passivity would be a crime. For a slave, it is an absolute duty. For a freedman it is a moral duty.”243 A wealthy paterfamilias was expected to possess several slaves in his quarters, and he would also feel free to have sex with them, as sex with slaves did not constitute grounds for adultery for the husband. Prostitutes were also 'free game,' and there were both female and male sex workers.244 Boswell tells us that male prostitution was taxed in Rome up until the sixth century C.E., and what is more, there was a demand for both active and passive male escorts.245 The situation of slaves and prostitutes provided a fertile ground for Roman aristocrats to be free from the moral constraints that their society imposed on them; however, as the situation of slaves changed to the eyes of some philosophers, this space for moral freedom ran the risk of becoming restricted in the long run. Seneca was already anticipating a concern for the slaves, stopping short of wanting the abolition of the institution, but nonetheless admonishing for a more humane treatment.246 This concern stemmed from Stoic philosophy, and the idea that all human beings had the divine substance—pneuma—in them, thus making them all—at least potentially—equal.247

242. “There is no shame in doing what the master requires” quoted from Martial and Petronius in Veyne, Roman Erotic Elegy, 78.
243. Ibid., 79.
244. Foucault, Care of the Self, 35, 190; Veyne “Roman Homosexuality,” Western Sexuality, 27-29; Nussbaum, “Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus,” 305; McGinn, Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome, 269.
245. Boswell, CSTH, 70, 79. The exoleti were over-aged Roman prostitutes, Skinner, Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture, 213.
246. Reydams-Schils, Roman Stoics, 158.
247. “In the ashes all men are levelled. We're born unequal, we die equal...The great lawgiver draws no distinctions between us according to our birth or the celebrity of our names, save only while we exist. On the reaching of mortality's end he declares, 'Away with snobbery; all that the earth carries shall forthwith be subject to one law without discrimination.' When it comes to all we're required to go through, we're equals.” Seneca Letters to Lucilius 91.
Possibly one of the greatest influences on Roman attitudes toward same-sex relationships was the high regard that the Romans had for marriage. Deemed only useful for reproduction and the transference of property in early Republican times, marriages acquired an unusual degree of respectability by the late Republic, with Romans believing that love and friendship could also be experienced with their wives. This ideal of mutual endearment was reflected by Plutarch when he stated:

Indeed, the ancients gave Hermes a place at the side of Aphrodite, in the conviction that the pleasure in marriage stands especially in need of reason; and they also assigned a place there to Persuasion and the Graces, so that married people should succeed in attaining their mutual desires by persuasion and not by fighting and quarreling.

Legal developments undertaken during the early years of the empire asserted this valorization and character of mutuality. Whereas Augustus's *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* encouraged men to marry and have offspring, other changes in the legislation also made marriage more egalitarian. Arranged marriages, which were the norm in Republican times, started to give way to consensual ones, and the all sovereign *manus* right of the father over his daughter also gave way to the husband's right over his wife. Moreover, women were now able to divorce their husbands if they could prove infidelity or mistreatment.

The difference between Greek and Roman philosophers in their conceptions of marriage and female virtue were not small. Whereas Plato and Zeno advocated for the abolition of marriage and the communal property of women and their offspring, the Roman Stoics considered marriage to be the foundation of civil society, and the natural state of relationships.

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249 Plutarch *Advise to Bride and Groom* in *Moralia* 138d.

250 Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 75-77; Nussbaum, “Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus,” 304-5. Although important gains for women, Rome remained a very male-centered society. Plutarch made this clear when he stated that women were to “keeping at home and keeping silence. For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband,” Plutarch *Advise to Bride and Groom* 32 in *Moralia* 142d.

Romans also conceived that women were capable of being recipients of the virtues of philosophy. On *Whether Marriage Is an Impediment to Doing Philosophy*, Musonius Rufus stated that “it wasn't an impediment to Pythagoras, or to Socrates, or to Crates, each of whom lived with a wife. And yet one could not find better philosophers than these.” And on *That Women Too Should Do Philosophy*, Musonius stated in unequivocally Stoic terms that:

> Women have received from the gods the same rational faculty (*logon*) as men, the faculty that we use to communicate with one another and to reason about each thing, whether it is a good thing or not, and whether it is noble or shameful. Similarly, the female has the same faculties of sense perception as the male: sight, hearing, smelling, and the rest. Similarly, each has the same bodily parts, and neither has any part that the other doesn't have. Furthermore, a desire for ethical excellence and a natural orientation toward it belong not only to men, but also to women. For women no less than men are pleased by noble and just actions, and reject the opposite...Since this is the way things are, why on earth would it be appropriate for men to inquire and examine how one should live well—which is what it is to do philosophy—and women not?²⁵³

This valorization of women did not come without its consequence for the love of boys, since the only philosophically justifiable thing that boys could provide to the philosopher—a companion in their quest for virtue—was now something women could provide as well. The desire for either men or women was the same, the passions that this desire could produce were also the same, and either type of love was capable of leading to virtue, but there was a difference.²⁵⁴ Sex within the male same-sex relationship could not stem from mutual consent. On the other hand, sex with the opposite sex could lead to offspring, and if practiced within a married couple, it was viewed as based on consent and friendship:

²⁵² Musonius Rufus *On Whether Marriage Is an Impediment to Doing Philosophy* (extract) as it appears in Nussbaum, “Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus,” Appendix.
²⁵³ Musonius Rufus *That Women Too Should Do Philosophy* as it appears in Nussbaum, “Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus,” Appendix.
²⁵⁴ If then, Protogenes, we have regard for the truth, excitement about boys and women is one and the same thing: Love,” Plutarch *Dialogue On Love* 5 in *Moralia* 751f; “Furthermore, the causes that they give for the generation of love are peculiar to neither sex and common to both. For is it really the case that visual shapes emanating from boys can, but the same from women cannot, enter into the body of the lover where, coursing through him, they stimulate and tickle the whole mass and, by gliding along with the other configurations of atoms, produce seed?” *Dialogue On Love* 21 in *Moralia* 766e.
in the case of lawful wives, physical union is the beginning of friendship, a sharing, as it were, in great mysteries. Pleasure is short; but the respect and kindness and mutual affection and loyalty that daily spring from it...

In addition, strong in the Roman Stoic mind still ran the Platonic notion that sex between men was in and of itself an expression of self-indulgence, as it went over the minimum requirements of bodily satisfaction. That the Roman Stoics would follow Plato and not Zeno in this idea makes sense, since they were known to use Plato's Socrates as their model of ethical behavior. The Roman Stoics adapted the Socratic ethics to their realities with the care of the self, valuing abstention in the midst of a morally loose society. Marcus Aurelius was not shy about confessing that he “kept unstained the flower of (his) youth,” and learned from his father “to suppress all passion for boys,” as chastity exerted respectability and admiration among his peers. If anything, Roman Stoics such as Seneca and Epictetus went even farther than the minimalist Socrates with an increasingly dualistic philosophy, shunning the body for the love of the soul. The Platonic notion of body as a prison of the soul made its comeback within Roman Stoic circles, thus Seneca would say to Lucilius:

harassed by the body's overwhelming weight, the soul is in captivity unless philosophy comes to its rescue, bidding it breathe more freely in the contemplation of nature, releasing it from earthly into heavenly surroundings. This to the soul means freedom, the ability to wander far and free; it steals away for a while from the prison in which it is confined and has its strength renewed in the world above.

The increasing hatred of body and constant guarding against pleasures could hardly accommodate a non-utilitarian aphrodisiac love of boys, so it is not surprising to find adherents

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256 The first century before the common era and the subsequent one were said to be centuries of great moral looseness for the upper classes in the Roman Empire, Veyne, Roman Erotic Elegy, 80. The Roman Stoics could be seen as reacting against this with their ethics, but also did other non Stoic philosophers such as Plutarch.
257 Marcus Aurelius Meditations 1.16, 17. On the other hand, Seneca lamented that “Some other things to which I once said good-bye have made their reappearance, but nevertheless, in these cases in which I have ceased to practice total abstinence, I succeed in observing a limit, which is something hardly more than a step removed from total abstinence...” Seneca Letters to Lucilius 108.
258 And for greater emphasis Seneca stated a little later “I am too great, was born to too great a destiny to be my body's slave.” Seneca Letters to Lucilius 65.
of this notion criticize sexual relations between men.

Even harder might have been justifying sex between men from a medical perspective. By the time of Galen, Greek medical philosophy was fully incorporated into Roman understandings and practices. The semen that men produced was valued as something precious and scarce, which had to be managed in order to be fertile and not fall into disease by disrupting the balance of the humors. Semen was elaborated in the blood by the *pneuma*, when the blood boiled and condensed—as foam—from the effect of aphrodisiac images or memories.\(^{259}\) Men did not possess unlimited amounts of semen, hence their seed needed to be conserved and only expelled in situations that merited it. Doing otherwise entailed the risk of effeminacy, as wasting seed entailed keeping lower levels of semen, which was thought to be the single element that made men masculine.\(^{260}\) Lower levels of semen could also deprive men of chances to reproduce, thus Plato's accusation of men who wasted their “sperm on rocks or stones” had the backing of the medical science, and would be echoed by other antagonists of male same-sex *aphrodisia* in Roman times.\(^{261}\)

It is clear that by the time of the Empire, same-sex *aphrodisia* found few ways of being justified philosophically. In the debates on the merits between the love of boys and the love of women, defenders of the first did not dare to justify sexual activity between men. In Pseudo-Lucian's *Affairs of the Heart*, the defender of the love of boys, Callicratidas, could only express


\(^{260}\) Ibid, 10-11, 19. 19th Century German physician Krafft-Ebing would still subscribe to this theory, as he cited research made on the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, whom had 'effeminate' men in their population due to their “excessive” masturbation and constant horse riding: “Gradually such irritable weakness of the genital organs is engendered that, in riding, great loss of semen is induced. This condition of irritability passes into paralytic impotence. Then atrophy of the testicles and penis sets in, the hair of the beard falls out, the voice looses its depth and compass, and physical strength and energy decrease. Inclinations and disposition become feminine,” Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 303-304.

\(^{261}\) The same sex entered the same bed. Though the saw themselves embracing each other, they were ashamed neither at what they did nor at what they had done to them, and, sowing their seed, to quote the proverb, on barren rocks they bought a little pleasure at the cost of great disgrace,” Pseudo-Lucian *Affairs of the Heart* 20.
that “one should love youths as Alcibiades was loved by Socrates who slept like a father with him under the same cloak,” and although the moderator of the debate considered relationships with boys justifiable, he did so to the extent that it “pays court to the hallow(ed) dues of friendship.”

This was a long ways from Zeno and the earlier Greek Stoics, whom conceived sex a neutral external and did not condemn all *aphrodisia* in male same-sex relationships. The most potent argument that defenders of same-sex *eros* had was based on the uniqueness of their relationships for leading to virtue, but the Romans were not used to the pedagogic relationships that the Greeks enjoyed, as they experienced same-sex relations only with social inferiors. The shunning of the love of boys in philosophical circles was well seen in Plutarch, and his adaptation of Aristophanes's myth on the origins of love. Instead of there being three original creatures, Plutarch seems to imply that there was only one half-male-half-female:

> Only to those two, though separated in body, forcibly join their souls and fuse them together, no longer wishing to be separate entities, or believing that they are so. In the next place, there is temperance, a mutual self-restraint which is a principal requirement of marriage.

By the first centuries of the Common Era, Roman philosophers began to introduce Stoic ideas to justify their distaste of same-sex relationships. In addition to the Platonic objections, some philosophers also saw same-sex relations as going against a universal Stoic law of nature. The Stoic “nature” was indeed different from the Platonic. This difference—as previously seen—had to do with Plato's disregard of the natural world, which in his mind was just an imperfect copy of the world of the intelligible forms, and although Plato had used “evidence” from the animal kingdom to condemn same-sex behaviors, the thrust of his argument was not based on

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262 Pseudo-Lucian *Affairs of the Heart* 49, 51. On the other hand, other 'less refined' men more comfortable with self-indulgence like Theomnestus thought different: “may the airy talkers and those who raise their philosophic brows temple-high and even higher, beguile the ignorant with the speciousness of their solemn phrases. For Socrates was as devoted to love as anyone and Alcibiades, once he had lain down beneath the same mantle with him, did not raise unassailed,” 54.

263 Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, 197.

264 Plutarch *Dialogue On Love* 21 in *Moralia* 767e.
The Stoics, on the other hand, valued the natural world as God's manifestation, and considered the laws of nature to also be the laws of God, applicable both to physics and ethics. A more serious analogy of the animal kingdom was already seen in the satirist Pseudo-Lucian, with the defender of the love of women stating:

If each man abided by the ordinances prescribed for us by Providence, we should be satisfied with intercourse with women and life would be uncorrupted by anything shameful. Certainly, among animals incapable of debasing anything through depravity of disposition the laws of nature are preserved undefiled. Lions have no passion for lions but love in due season evokes in them desire for the females of their kind. The bull, monarch of the herd, mounts cows, and the ram fills the whole flock with seed from the male. Furthermore do not boars seek to lie with sows? Do not wolves mate with she-wolves? And, to speak in general terms, neither the birds whose wings whir on high, nor the creatures whose lot is a wet one beneath the water nor yet any creatures upon land strive for intercourse with fellow males, but the decisions of Providence remain unchanged...If each and every man should choose to emulate such (same-sex) conduct, the human race will come to a complete end (my emphasis and parenthesis).

Thus, according to Lucian sex between men went against the laws of nature that were reflected in non-rational animals, who only seemed to have sex between male and female for reproductive purposes. In a material world alive with the immanent principle of God reflected in nature, sex between men went against nature, and against God.

This combination of Stoic natural law and Platonic ethics produced more potent arguments against same-sex relationships. In addition to natural law, sex between men seemed to also go against human nature, or human telos. In the same fashion in which God built the cosmos, the human body was also built with a design, and all of its organs fulfilled a specific function within it, for which they were created in the first place. Following this thinking, male genitalia was thought to be built with the specific function of procreation, to join together with the female genitalia. Thus Epictetus expressed:

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265 According to Plato, same-sex sex was wrong not because it was not found in nature, but because it could not lead to goodness as intended in the form of the good: “Now surely” the citizens “ought to be superior to the beasts, at least!” Plato Laws 840d-e.

266 Pseudo-Lucian Affairs of the Heart 22.
And the male and the female, and the appetite of each for intercourse with the other, and the faculty which makes use of the organs which have been constructed for this purpose, do these things not reveal their artificer either? (my emphasis)²⁶⁷

This was the law of nature, the design, and Stoic and Platonic ethics demanded that men be limited to fulfill nature's design and be satisfied with it. Using male genitalia for purposes other than reproduction with the opposite sex went against and beyond the design, and it was no longer seen to fulfill any important function, as there was no 'reproduction of the mind' to appeal to.²⁶⁸ Whereas sexual desire for the same sex was still seen as normal and part of the experience of most people in the ancient world, acting on these desires became increasingly problematic and difficult to justify from a philosophical standpoint, and this situation only became more difficult after the triumph of Christianity.

Jewish and Christian communities living scattered throughout the Roman Empire were not impermeable from Greek philosophy, and their ideas on same-sex eros and aphrodisia were inherited in some degree from Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, Christians never had to look too far to the pagan world for arguments against same-sex sexuality, as they had a rich history of them themselves in their Scriptures. Christian positions against same-sex aphrodisia show both influences, as it is readily seen in Paul's Romans and subsequent writings of the Latin Church Fathers, a subject to which we will now turn our attention.

²⁶⁸ The Roman elites often used Greek slaves to be the tutors of their children. In this context, it is difficult to think of a pedagogic relationship between master and student of the kind which the Greeks were accustomed to.
CHAPTER IV
THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND ITS GREEK UNDERPINNINGS

The perception of Christianity in the Roman world has often been that of an oasis in the middle of a desert, a religion stressing the love of neighbor, spirituality, and monotheism in the midst of a cruel world without regard for humanity, obsessed with meaningless rituals and dozens of gods. Notwithstanding this image, many of the valuable ethical precepts which are thought to come from the Judaeo-Christian tradition were common currency for the pagan moralists of the first centuries of the Common Era. Roman Stoics like Seneca and Epictetus embraced the notion of a common humanity, and valued the importance of showing clemency and loving one's enemies.269 Christian and Stoic positions regarding the institution of slavery were also remarkably similar, with both advocating a more humane treatment of the slave and neither openly calling for the abolition of the institution.270 Like the first Christians, the Stoics also placed an emphasis on intention and internal states of mind, and thought that consistent good actions followed from a perfect state of being akin to the Christian “righteousness.” And although the pagan world was polytheistic, the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic philosophies were monists, considering an ultimate single divine cause responsible for the universe.271

271 These schools did accommodate several other deities which were ascribed certain powers of God. In this way, these philosophies respected the traditional religious understandings of the pagan world, but they still maintained that ultimately one God created the universe and the laws of nature. For instance, the Stoics maintained that: “The deity, say they, is a living being, immortal, rational, perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting nothing evil (into him), taking providential care of the world and all that therein is, but he is not of human shape. He is, however, the artificer of the universe and, as it were, the father of all, both in general and in that particular part of him which is
Much has been written about the Jewish heritage of Christianity, but only recently have scholars focused on the influence that pagan philosophy has had in the Christian religion. Hellenistic influences ran strong east of the Mediterranean since the fourth century B.C.E., when Alexander's conquest of Egypt and Palestine launched the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties, rulers of the middle-east well until the time of the Romans. Greek philosophy became common currency for the educated classes of the region, and it was not always easily separated from religion. Philo of Alexandria certainly embodied the idea that in his time, someone could be a devout Jew and a pagan philosopher. Philo understood and articulated the revealed message of the Old Testament within the framework of Greek philosophy, and he was not shy about his indebtedness to Plato. In the same vein, some scholars are increasingly arguing about Paul's Greek philosophical influences, which can be traced in his epistles.

Philo's Philosophy

Philo Judaeus was believed to have been born in the last quarter of the first century B.C.E., into a wealthy Jewish family from Alexandria. He possessed Roman citizenship and had political obligations in his community, which enabled him to enjoy Roman activities such as chariot races, plays, and banquets. As part of his education, Philo was steeped into the Greek philosophy of the Roman Empire. In his time, the Greek schools of philosophy became more malleable, each incorporating elements from the other and becoming increasingly linked to all-pervading, and which is called many names according to its various powers. They give the name Dia because all things are due to him; Zeus in so far as he is the cause of life or pervades all life; the name Athena is given, because the ruling part of the divinity extends to the aether; the name Hera marks its extension to the air; he is called Hephaestus since it spreads to the creative fire; Poseidon, since it stretches to the sea; Demeter, since it reaches to the earth.” Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers 7. 142-143. Augustine also distinguished between mythical, philosophical and popular understandings of religion, where the first kind referred to the myths about which poets sang, not particularly believed to describe the nature of the gods; the second kind described the reality of the nature of the gods, and the third had to do with the civic rites that were practiced in the Empire. City of God 5.5.

274 Goodenough, Philo Judaeus, 2-7.
religious cults and myths. In this landscape, the Stoic and Platonic schools were the most popular, but they were changed copies of their Greek original versions.²⁷⁵

Philo has been identified as a Platonist of his time, known today as Middle-Platonism.²⁷⁶ He believed in a transcendent immaterial god similar to Plato's form of the Good, which Philo linked to the Jewish god of the Old Testament, Yahweh. According to Philo, Yahweh created the world of the senses through his wisdom—logos—by stamping the seal of the world of the forms upon the matter, and in this way giving form to everything in the cosmos.²⁷⁷ In this vein, Philo believed that the forms already existed in day one of Genesis's creation, with the rest of the material creation unfolding in the subsequent days—the length of days being interpreted in an allegorical manner.²⁷⁸ Thenceforth, Yahweh ruled the universe through his powers of goodness and authority, which were manifested in the laws of nature.²⁷⁹ The ensuing material world would only be an imperfect copy of the seal of this perfect incorporeal reality, but everything in it was the product of an intelligent design according to Yahweh's logos, which remained active as the soul of the world, animating everything in nature.²⁸⁰

This Philonic cosmos had both Platonic and Stoic traits, as it was organized by a transcendent God according to the intelligible forms, and it also had a world-soul immanent throughout the material cosmos. This world-soul was not God himself—as the Stoics would


²⁷⁶Ibid.


consider—but rather an emanation from God which pervaded the material cosmos and gave it the order and balance that humans could perceive in the laws of nature. This divine emanation was like a stream flowing from a spring, or speech following human thoughts, and was ultimately what connected the intelligible world of the forms and divine Wisdom to the material world inhabited by humans.\textsuperscript{281} Philo believed that the goal of human behavior was to act according to the divine principles that ordered the universe, which were no other than its natural laws. But unlike most Stoics, Philo believed that these laws had already been translated for the human mind in the Old Testament. Moses had received the laws of nature from God himself, and relayed them the rest of the Jewish population in exodus in what is known as the Ten Commandments.\textsuperscript{282} In this way, the Jewish people did not need to think long and hard about what followed nature and what did not, since unlike their pagan brothers and sisters, they had the specifics already written for them. Moses in this way—like Socrates for the pagans,—embodied the model of ethical perfection, and served as a guide for living the good life.\textsuperscript{283}

As the divine principles of the universe, the laws of nature could also be found within creation, and specifically within the only rational creature of the world, man. The Old Testament stated that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”\textsuperscript{284} Philo interpreted this passage to apply to the human soul, which he believed was divided into a higher and a lower soul, similar to Plato's distinction between the rational and irrational parts.\textsuperscript{285} The higher soul, or mind, was no other than a copy of God's \textit{logos}, which contained the principles of goodness with which he ruled the world. God gave this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{281}Goodenough, \textit{Philo Judaeus}, 97-98; Winston, \textit{Logos and Mystical Theology}, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{282}Williamson, \textit{Jews in the Hellenistic World}, 201-2, 207.
\item \textsuperscript{283}Ibid, 205.
\item \textsuperscript{284}Genesis 1:27.
\item \textsuperscript{285}Winston, \textit{Logos and Mystical Theology}, 30; Goodenough, \textit{Philo Judaeus}, 113.
\end{itemize}
to men as expressed in Genesis 2:7 when he “breathed into” man's “nostrils the breath of life.”

Philo's mind was not rational in the modern way of understanding, entailing critical thinking. Man's higher soul entailed a divine consciousness that knew the principles of right and wrong. The lower mind on the other hand encompassed discursive reasoning and the perception of the external world through the bodily senses. Consequently, humans could only do well in following their higher soul, but this could not always be possible thanks to the lower soul and its affinity to bodily needs which always dragged the soul down. Thus humans had to completely align themselves with their higher minds, and try to escape the needs of their bodies in order to achieve their goal. The only way they could do this was through God's grace, since mere reasoning was a function of the lower soul and could not aid men in their quest to escape their bodies. In this religious version of Platonism, the ideal man was no longer an enkratos who managed the needs of his body according to reason, but one who depended on God to completely escape his body and achieve a mystical union with him, aligning himself with his higher soul. This idea would not die here, as Paul and the later Neoplatonists would also embrace it.

There are many reasons why Philo is an important figure to take into account in the development of Christianity. An evident one is that influential Christian fathers such as Ambrose took him as a reference in their writings and sermons. As surprising as it may sound, Philo was considered by many scholars a Christian up until the sixteenth century. There is also the place that Philo occupies within the development of Platonism, which transitioned by the third century into the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry, so influential to Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. But arguably the biggest reason for including Philo in a chapter devoted to Christian and pagan

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286Ibid, 112-3.
287Ibid, 113-120.
288Ibid, 118.
289Peter Brown, Body and Society, 346; Winston, Logos and Mystical Theology, 9-10.
philosophy has to do with his contextual closeness to significant figures in the history of Christianity. Philo was a contemporary of figures like Seneca, Paul of Tarsus, and Jesus himself.\textsuperscript{291} His writings reflect certain ideas that were floating around in his time, which may have also influenced the early Christians. Ultimately, through Philo and the Roman Stoics we can get an interesting angle into the thinking of an early Christian such as Paul.\textsuperscript{292} This is nowhere best seen than in what Philo and Paul had to say about same-sex relations, which was not only similar, but also stemmed from a related philosophical background.

Like Philo, Paul was an educated Greek-speaking Roman citizen who seemed to have been acquainted with the philosophical schools of his time.\textsuperscript{293} He was a Hellenized Jew who had persecuted the first followers of Jesus, before himself converting to Christianity upon receiving a divine revelation. Unlike the other followers of Jesus, Paul took it upon himself to extend the “good message” to the rest of the pagan world, traveling far and wide throughout the Greek cities of the Roman Empire, and exchanging letters with the incipient Christian communities that were forming throughout the Mediterranean. Paul's Christian communities consisted of Gentiles and Jews from all walks of life, and his task was to unite them all under the same message.\textsuperscript{294} Platonic and Stoic philosophy may have served as the common language used, a medium in which Paul could articulate Jesus's message so that his audiences could understand it.\textsuperscript{295} Some modern scholars have placed Paul within the Socratic ethical tradition, and with a vision of the world similar to the Roman Stoics and Middle-Platonists like Philo. His ascetic and dualistic views of the flesh and the spirit reflect this Graeco-Roman heritage, as much as they may also

\textsuperscript{291}Williamson, Jews in the Hellenistic World, 1.
\textsuperscript{292}Goodenough, Philo Judaeus, x.
\textsuperscript{294}Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.” Romans 3:29-30.
\textsuperscript{295}Engberg-Pedersen “Setting the Scene: Stoicism and Platonism,” Stoicism in Early Christianity, 12; Thorsteinsson, “Stoicism as a Key to Pauline Ethics in Romans,” Stoicism in Early Christianity, 19.
betray the influence of contemporary ascetic Jewish groups such as the Essenes, and the Qumran communities. Paul's understanding of Christian communities as living body organisms, with functions assigned to each of the parts, also betray a micro-macro cosmic way of thinking, so similar to the way the Stoics and Middle-Platonists viewed the world.

Paul believed that virtue was a state of being—righteousness—which people were either in or out of. Achieving this state signified being aligned with the higher soul, or spirit, which contained God's natural laws. But being aligned with the spirit also implied a proper theological understanding. How could someone follow God's laws when he did not know God? In the Stoic case, understanding God implied knowing nature, as God was intrinsic to it. A person realized his potential when he acted according to nature, and acting according to nature led to the state of apatheia. In this state of perfect rationality, choosing right became clear and the possibility for mistakes was nonexistent. Paul did not think that God was within nature, as nature, according to Genesis, was the creation of a transcendent God. Nevertheless, Paul thought that in order to achieve a state of virtue, one had to have a proper theological understanding of God. This understanding could only be achieved through faith in Jesus, as Jesus was God's logos incarnate. Here Paul gets close to Philo, in that following the message of a particular religious figure entailed following nature, or God's logos. Conversely not having faith in Jesus meant not

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297 “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Romans 12:4-5. Stoic influence is not extraneous to other Christian authors of the New Testament either. In 2 Peter 3 there seems to be a reference to the end of times as a world-conflagration, J. Albert Harrill, “Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the ‘Ignorant and Unstable’ in 2 Peter,” Stoicism in Early Christianity, 116.


299 Romans 3:22 “This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”
being aligned with the spirit in a perfect state of rationality, which entailed the risk of sin.\textsuperscript{300} In this way, Paul's understanding of a perfect faith in Jesus was analogous to the state of \textit{apatheia}, one in which a person could no longer do wrong.\textsuperscript{301} It is this frame of reference that we must bear in mind when analyzing the famous comments that Paul made about same-sex relations.

**Paul and Philo on Same-Sex Relations**

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood for what has been made, so that people are without excuse...Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator...Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done (my emphases.)\textsuperscript{302}

In the passage above, it becomes clear that people engaging in same-sex relations were not the main focus of Paul's invective, as they are only shown as an example of the consequences that not following “the real” God could bring. From this, John Boswell interpreted that Paul did not to condemn “homosexuality” at all, stating that:

To suggest that Paul's references to excess of sexual indulgence involving homosexual behavior are indicative of a general position in opposition to same-sex eroticism is as unfounded as arguing that his condemnation of drunkenness implies opposition to the drinking of wine.\textsuperscript{303}

\textsuperscript{300}Engberg-Pedersen, \textit{Paul and the Stoics}, 208.
\textsuperscript{301}The similarity lays on the perfect state of unclouded rationality that implied having faith in Jesus, but this did not imply in itself a state of \textit{apatheia}. Paul valued certain passions that the Stoics would have scoffed at. In Romans 12:15, for instance, Paul encouraged the faithful to “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”
\textsuperscript{302}Romans 1:18-28.
\textsuperscript{303}Boswell, \textit{CSTH}, 117.
I do not agree with Boswell’s interpretation. Christianity had a hostile view of sexual pleasure from its beginning—same-sex or opposite-sex—and Paul reflected this attitude as well as anyone. For Paul, “homosexual” behavior of any type was in and of itself an expression of self indulgence or “weakness of the flesh” analogous to getting drunk, and he was not alone in this idea. Paul's statements against same-sex behavior fit squarely within Graeco-Roman and Jewish increasingly ascetic perceptions of sex, as something that could pollute the soul and obstruct a spiritual union with God. Furthermore, Romans 1 was not the only passage where Paul referred to same-sex relations in a negative manner.

In Romans 1, Paul referred to same-sex behavior as an example of the type of moral

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304 Boswell's argument was based on three main points: 1) That Paul did not conceive that there could be a sexual identity related to same-sex attraction, so he could not have condemned a group of people—homosexuals—but rather, what he was condemning was a behavior. This idea was first espoused by Bailey, whom adduced Paul’s lack of awareness of a homosexual condition to his argument that he did not condemn homosexuals, Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition, 38. 2) That Paul's usage of “unnatural” could not have meant a behavior going against “natural law” barring homosexuality, since this concept of natural law was only developed much later in the high Middle Ages. This argument would be echoed years later by Robin Scroggs, whom considered that Paul’s lack of a philosophical awareness in his use of the term unnatural made his condemnation shallow and without much meaning, Robin Scroggs, The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 117. 3) That Paul did not condemn all same-sex sexual behaviors as “unnatural,” but only those behaviors—homosexual and heterosexual—that exceeded the limits of nature. I agree with Boswell's first point, and this was a premise for this paper, since it is currently agreed upon that neither the Greeks, nor the Romans, nor Paul viewed sexual attraction as an identity. Boswell on the other hand, has made the claim throughout CSTH that there were gay and lesbian identified people in antiquity, but as the essentialist-social constructionist wars showed, he did not count with good evidence for this assessment. Boswell's second point was not well supported in CSTH; in page 110, footnote 61, he acknowledged that Philo understood “nature” in the context of natural law, but thought that Philo had “confusing” ideas about it, and “among the fathers influenced by or familiar with Philo's (or similar) ideas the confusion was increased rather than diminished.” In Philo's and Paul's time the concept of natural law was prevalent, as it was intrinsic to Roman Stoic philosophy. Natural law and the idea that same-sex sex went against it is seen in the writings of Epictetus and in Philo. Lastly, in the third point Boswell was not helpful in clarifying which same-sex behaviors did not go beyond nature and which did. The claim of this paper is that all same-sex behaviors were seen as going beyond nature, as they went beyond the minimum satisfaction of nature's requirements on sex, which was reproduction. This was part of the Socratic ethics of abstinence which made such an impact in antiquity.

305 Christians distinguished themselves in the Roman Empire for their sexual abstinence. In the second century, Galen said of the Christians “Their contempt for death is patent to us every day, and likewise their restraint from intercourse. For they include not only men but also women who refrain from intercourse all through their lives.” as quoted in Brown, Body and Society, 33.

306 Paul stated: “Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God,” adding that “whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies,” 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.
“torpor” that was typical in the pagan world, the consequence of not following the one “true” God. His understanding was framed within the Stoic and Middle-Platonic notion that an incorrect epistemological understanding of the world—as in a misunderstanding of God's logos—was intrinsically related to “moral depravity.” It is no coincidence that Paul referred to same-sex behaviors as “unnatural,” since according to him they did not follow the laws of the immanent logos in nature even prior to the advent of Jesus, “for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood for what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” However, the improper relationship that pagans maintained with their Creator, choosing to worship things that were part of the creation by exchanging “the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles,” condemned them to not being able to attain a state of righteousness, which left them vulnerable to moral depravity. In this way, idolatry and same-sex relations were the perfect example of this lack of theological and ethical understanding, which went hand in hand.

However, Paul's views were not only aided by Hellenistic conceptions of natural law, virtue and sexual morality, as the Old Testament itself was explicit in its condemnation of sexual relations between members of the same sex. Jewish religion was very stringent in its norms concerning purity and cleanliness. Leviticus is full of interesting rules on what not to eat, what not to wear, how one should sacrifice an animal to God, and how a molded piece of clothing should be dispensed of. Since sexual relations involved the touching of bodies and the release

308 The pious non-Christian Jews were in a better position, in the sense that they practiced the law, but in not accepting Jesus they were vulnerable to akrasia, as they did not have his spirit inside them to guide them. Engberg-Pedersen, Paul and the Stoics, 254.
309 Leviticus 11:13-19 on what not to eat: “These are the birds you are to regard as unclean and not eat because they are unclean: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl,
of bodily emissions such as semen and sometimes blood, they entailed uncleanness and had to be regulated.\(^{310}\) In this way, the Jews placed an emphasis on containing sexual activity within the married couple.\(^{311}\) Adultery—even for males—was condemned in the Ten Commandments, and male same-sex relations were condemned in Leviticus 18:22 as “detestable.”\(^{312}\) Leviticus 20:13 stipulated the punishment for this act, stating that “If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.” Their strict sexual laws forbidding same-sex relations and marriage outside the faith served to distinguish the Jewish population from their pagan neighbors.\(^{313}\) This is why Paul's message concerning same-sex relations was addressed to the gentiles and not the Jews, as Jewish people would have already known to abstain from it.

In Paul's time, groups of Jewish males lived side by side in a celibate state, in constant contemplation, and awaiting for the end of times. The Essenes and the Qumran communities considered women and “the flesh” an impediment to achieving “singleness of heart,” or a
complete and open predisposition to God's laws. Paul showed a disposition similar to these groups, displaying what Peter Brown calls “a brutal dualism,” in his war of the spirit against the flesh.\textsuperscript{314} At this time, Philo had also considered all sexual pleasure highly suspect, even the one experienced in the marriage bed:

> even natural pleasure is often greatly to blame when anyone indulges in it immoderately and insatiably—as...in the case of those who feel a passionate desire for sex and who in their excessive urge for intercourse act lustfully—not with the wives of other men, but with their own wives.\textsuperscript{315}

Philo believed that men's semen needed to be conserved for procreative purposes, and he condemned the practice of sex during a woman's menstrual period as disrespectful to “the law of nature,” as men needed to “learn not to waste generative sperm for the sake of pleasure, untimely and in bad taste.”\textsuperscript{316} This condemnation also applied to men who had sex with infertile women, “plough(ing) the hard and stony land...for, in the pursuit of unbridled pleasure, like the most lustful of men, they deliberately destroy their procreative sperm.”\textsuperscript{317} Ultimately all sex aimed not to procreate was condemned as going against nature:

> For while God, in his love for living creatures and for mankind, takes all imaginable care to secure the preservation and permanent survival of every species, these people who, on the contrary, make every effort to quench the life of the sees as it is ejected, are confessedly enemies of nature.\textsuperscript{318}

Philo's position concerning sexual relations between partners of the same sex echoed this condemnation of non-procreative sex. In condemning these relations, Philo made a distinction that has been blurred in our modern age, but which was part and parcel of how same-sex relations were understood in the ancient times; the difference between passive and active

\textsuperscript{314}In Galatians 5:24 Paul stated that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires;” Brown, \textit{Body and Society}, 35-39, 48.
\textsuperscript{315}This intemperate desire he adduced to “an abundant reservoir of moisture” in the soul, “which is passed through ducts to the sexual organs, producing there ceaseless longings, irritations and sensitiveness.”Philo \textit{On the Special Laws} 3. 9-10, as quoted in Williamson, \textit{Jews in the Hellenistic World}, 279.
\textsuperscript{316}Philo \textit{On the Special Laws} 3. 32, as quoted in Williamson, 289.
\textsuperscript{317}Ibid, 34, as quoted in Williamson, 289.
\textsuperscript{318}Ibid, 36, as in Williamson, 290.
partners. He referred to the passive partners as:

Accustomed to suffer from the affliction of a malady which assigns to them the female role, they acquiesce in the wasting away of both their bodies and their souls, without leaving to smoulder among the ashes the least spark of masculinity. Note how conspicuously they curl and adorn their hair, and how they scrub and paint their faces with rouge and paints and the like, and anoint their skins with fragrant perfumes...In fact the transformation of the male to the female nature by artificial behavior is practiced without a blush. Such persons are naturally considered worthy of death by those who obey the Law, which commands that the man—woman, who falsifies the stamp of nature, should not be allowed to live for a day unavenged, or even an hour, since he is a disgrace to himself, to his household, to his fatherland, and to the whole human race.  

According to Philo, the passive partner violated nature by subverting his masculine sex role to the feminine, letting himself be penetrated in the sexual act as women commonly did. This subversion of sex roles implied a change of sex, whereby the passive partner completely adopted the feminine role in other aspects of life as well, by wearing perfumes and makeup. The notion that these persons suffered from “the affliction of a malady” was well embedded in Greek and Roman culture, as was seen in previous chapters. Moreover, the Old Testament had also condemned gender ambiguity in Deuteronomy 22:5, where it was stated that “A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.” However, certain degree of transgenderism was tolerated in pagan society, where some pagan celebrations made use of passive male prostitutes who castrated themselves, a point to which Augustine would also allude centuries later in his *City of God*. This association between passive gender ambiguous males and pagan rites did not escape Philo, who condemned it with force:

At all events these hybrids of men and women can be seen swaggering about in the crowded market-places, at the head of festal processions, appointed, unholy as they are, to serve as ministers of holy things, presiding over mysteries and initiatory rites, and celebrating the feasts of Demeter. Those of them who, desiring to prolong their youthful beauty, have desired to be completely transformed into women and have castrated

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320 Augustine *City of God* 7.26.
themselves, and have clothed themselves in purple robes, and are surrounded by an escort like the great benefactors of their native lands, stride in front, drawing the attentions of passers-by to themselves.

He recommended the “extermination” of these passive males, so that it served as a warning to other criminals.\(^\text{321}\)

But passive male same-sex partners were not the only people who infuriated Philo.

Regarding the active partner, he expressed:

And let the pederast know that he is subject to the same penalty, since he pursues a form of pleasure contrary to nature, and since, as far as he is concerned, he does his best to make cities desolate and uninhabited by destroying the creative seed. And, moreover, he does not shrink from being a guide and teacher of those greatest of evils, unmanliness and effeminacy, adulterating young men when in their prime, and making them effeminate in the flower of their youth, which ought to have been trained for strength and might of body.\(^\text{322}\)

The pederast's blame resided in his role of subverting the erōmenos's gender role, and the “unnatural” use of his semen, which went to waste as it was not aimed to procreate. As Philo had warned before, this unsuitable use of the male seed made the user an “enemy of nature,” because it threatened the reproduction of the human species according to God's laws of nature. Philo associated the pederast with philosophers who acted as pedagogues of youth in their formative years. In this way, he continued the Platonic line of criticism of sexually active pedagogic relationships.

Whereas Paul did not expand on his criticism of same-sex relations, choosing to focus on it only as a behavior that did not stem from the knowledge of God, Philo was very clear that they went against nature according to both Jewish Law and pagan philosophical conceptions of the time.\(^\text{323}\) Neither Paul nor Philo had any favorable views of bodily pleasures, and their views on

\(^{321}\) Philo On the Special Laws 3. 40-42, as in Williamson, 291.
\(^{322}\) Ibid., 39, as in Williamson, 291.
\(^{323}\) Paul’s lack of an emphasis in addressing same-sex behaviors may have been due in part to a lack of an acquaintance with the phenomenon, as it did not seem to be as prevalent among the Jewish people. Also, he was not
same-sex pleasures were but an extension of this thinking. Moreover, both seemed to equate same-sex relations with a defective spiritual condition, consequence of a mistaken religious adherence. It is hard to overstate the central role that Paul has had in the birth and development of Christianity. But in his time, Paul was but a vocal leader of an incipient small religious movement, which would be harshly persecuted over the ensuing centuries. Christianity only became influential to the Roman societies at large by late antiquity, in a time of great difficulties for the Empire.

**Late Antiquity: The City of Men, and the City of God**

During the third century, the Roman Empire suffered a series of crises that left the socio-political infrastructure of its empire—some would argue—permanently crippled. The Persian Empire seemed to be the greatest military threat that the Romans faced, defeating the Romans in a series of conflicts during the century, and even capturing Emperor Valerian at the battle of Edessa in 260. The other major military threat came east of the Rhine-Danube border, with groups of Germanic peoples derogatorily called “barbarians” which aimed to infiltrate the Roman borders. These groups had grown tremendously from contact with the Roman populations across the borders, and they also became increasingly acquainted with the military tactics of the Roman armies. Although the Germanic peoples did not pose a serious threat to the

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324 Charles Freeman has echoed other scholars in calling Paul the founder of Christianity, as Jesus may have not intended a religion different from Judaism for his followers, Charles Freeman, *The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 107.
325 According to Edward Gibbon, things started to go downhill for the Roman Empire from the time Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, assumed power in 180 C.E., Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 4, 75-89. This opinion is currently not shared by all historians. Peter Heather argues that the Roman Empire had recovered from its military embarrassments of the third century with Diocletian's reforms, and would not start declining until the fifth century. In any case, both opinions agree on the calamitous circumstances of the Empire in the third century. See Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 111-119.
326 Ibid, 59-60; Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 8, 145.
stability of the empire at the time, by the third century they had become strong enough to cause some serious damage to their neighboring populations, and in the year 251 the Goths defeated and killed Roman Emperor Decius.\textsuperscript{327} These military stings were coupled with a grave political crisis in the empire's transference of power, which spiraled into civil wars and mercenary groups declaring emperors. Between 237 and 238 there were seven different emperors, six of them killed one after another.\textsuperscript{328} The increasing number of wars that the Romans faced, and their endemic political crisis required some extraordinary changes to the structure of the empire. Emperor Diocletian partially solved the problem by creating a tetrarchy with four emperors located in cities close to the military threats, increasing the central civil administration of the empire, and concentrating his military garrisons on the borders, with mobile and stationary troops. The ensuing increment of bureaucracy resulted in an increase of the provincial taxation, and a centralization of power which shifted the power and influence of the local tax-collecting curial oligarchies. As the city of Rome was far from the borders, it became irrelevant in the geopolitical context of the empire, and emperors did not even care to visit it.\textsuperscript{329} By 410 Alaric the Goth sacked the city of Rome for the first time since the Gauls had done it almost eight hundred years before, and in the last quarter of the century the western part of the empire finally succumbed under the barbarian incursions, after the Vandals took possession of the grain producing Northern African provinces.\textsuperscript{330} Constantinople, the Eastern Rome founded by Emperor Constantine in the fourth century survived the onslaught, but it was never able to recover the lost western territories.\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{327} Heather, \textit{Fall of the Roman Empire}, 84-99; Gibbon, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire}, chapter 8, 136; Gregory, \textit{Neoplatonists}, 16.
\textsuperscript{328} Gibbon \textit{Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire}, chapter 6, 128; Gregory, \textit{Neoplatonists}, 16.
\textsuperscript{329} Heather, \textit{Fall of the Roman Empire}, 24-25, 115-117.
\textsuperscript{330} Gibbon, \textit{Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire}, chapter 28, 528-532; Heather, \textit{Fall of the Roman Empire}, 395-407.
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid, 431.
This was the historico-political backdrop to a period called late antiquity, a time of momentous changes which brought, among other things, the triumph of Christianity. During this time, the philosophical schools of the Roman Empire also underwent transformations, with Platonism becoming the most influential one to the detriment of Stoicism, and with Epicureanism becoming almost extinct. The triumphant Platonic school was a dogmatic Platonism, which grew parallel to the skepticism of the Academicians, also Platonists who based their doctrines on the early Socratic dialogues. The most dominant figure of this Platonism of late antiquity—also known as Neoplatonism—was Plotinus. Born in Lycopolis, Egypt in the year 205 C.E., Plotinus worked for most of his life in Rome, surrounding himself with students and studying the works of Plato. He aimed to clarify Plato, but along the way he introduced some new developments of his own, and some which were in the making for quite some time. The Neoplatonic principle of divine immanence was already anticipated in Philo in the first century, and the dualistic conflict between matter and soul was as old as Plato—and even older,—and well ingrained within Roman Stoicism. However, Plotinus and the Neoplatonists seemed to have gone farther than any of their predecessors in the importance that they attached to the intelligible world of the soul and the disregard that they showed for the material world where humans inhabited. To the Neoplatonists, the world of the senses just did not seem to matter much, people's political obligations and ties to the external world were temporal and insignificant, and the body was a burden that the soul had to carry for as long as it functioned. Matter was the ultimate source of evil, and happiness was to be found not in this world, but in another.

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334 Smith, *Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, 4-5. “Plotinus, whose memory is quite recent, enjoys the reputation of having understood Plato better than any other of his disciples,” Augustine *City of God* 9.10.
Plotinus further developed Platonic conceptions of the intelligible, introducing the divine trinity of the One, the Intellect, and the World-Soul.\textsuperscript{336}

According to the Neoplatonists, the One (God) was beyond time and space, and beyond anything that any human rational mind could comprehend. He operated through his divine Intellect, which thought the forms with which the material world was formed. The Intellect was one step below from the One, and it consisted on the activity of thinking the forms.\textsuperscript{337} Through self-contemplation the One made it possible for the Intellect to exist, and through self-contemplation the Intellect made the World-Soul possible, which was responsible for animating the cosmos according to the Intellect's plan.\textsuperscript{338} God's immanence throughout the cosmos was made present through the World-Soul, but the World-Soul was not to be confused with either the One or his divine Intellect. There was a clearly defined hierarchy of One-Intellect-Soul, in which the One was the ultimate source of everything, and where his \textit{emanation} occasioned the existence of the other two noetic principles. Like a ray of light whose illumination is felt less the more distanced it is from the object, the One's emanation was felt less in the entities that were more distant to him. Matter was the farthest away from the One's ultimate source of goodness, and stemming from this distance, matter could be conceived as the source of evil. This evil was not absolute, and it was the product of a lack of goodness.\textsuperscript{339} The material cosmos, at first a formless matter, was formed by the Intellect according to the forms, and it was animated by the World-Soul, which regulated the basic principles of growth and reproduction. This ordered cosmos was not evil, as it was ordered by the forms of the Intellect; what was evil was the

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\item\textsuperscript{336} Chadwick, \textit{Augustine}, 19.
\item\textsuperscript{337} Smith, \textit{Philosophy in Late Antiquity}, 19-23, 28-29.
\item\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., 38.
\item\textsuperscript{339} Ibid., 41, 49; Gregory, \textit{Neoplatonists}, 13; Chadwick, \textit{Augustine}, 19.
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underlying matter with which the cosmos was formed.  

Human beings occupied the sub lunar realm of the material cosmos, living on Earth along with other animals and plants. But these living beings were not alone in the world, as they shared their space with other incorporeal beings called demons.  

Pagans generally considered demons to be intermediaries between humans and the gods. Living in the atmospheric air, they were closest to humans and passed their messages to the gods. Although they were unbodied souls, demons were not pure, as they had passions and could drag human souls downward toward their bodies. Demons did not have supreme powers, but they could sometimes foresee the future and also facilitate magic, since they had power over the natural sympathy that existed among everything in the cosmos stemming from the immanence of the World-Soul. The traditional Greek gods were more powerful than the demons, and they were located above the sub lunar realm, in the ethereal heaven. The gods were good and looked after the people, and they could intercede in human affairs, but they could only be approached by the demons.  

In late antiquity, incorporeal magic entities such as demons were a fact of life, and both pagans and Christians believed in them. But not all pagans and Christians coincided in their interpretation of demons, with pagans considering some demons good and some bad, and Christians considering them all downright evil. Human bodies did not allow people to see these entities, but people could sense demons through their souls, as they manifested in their daily thoughts. 

Like the cosmos, human beings also contained an intellect, soul and body. The human

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340 About the formed cosmos Plotinus stated: “Matter, therefore, if it always existed, could not but share in that Source that bestows Good on its creatures, universally and to the capacity of each; and if it came to birth of necessity as a consequent of prior causes, not even so could it be excluded from the Good,” Enneads 4.8.6. About unformed matter Plotinus stated: “It is the substrate which underlies figures, forms, shapes, measures and limits, submitting itself to extraneous ordering, possessing no good of itself, a mere shadow in relation to real Being, the very essence of Evil, if such is possible,” Enneads 1.8.3.

341 Winston, Logos and Mystical Theology, 32.


soul was amphibious and incorporeal as it was involved with both the body and the intellect, ensouling and animating the body.³⁴⁴ Plotinus believed that the soul was divided into a higher, mediate and lower “portion.” The higher soul was the part more external and farthest away from the human body, and it was akin to the divine Intellect, containing the knowledge of goodness, beauty and truth. The lower soul was closer to the body and the world of the senses, being constantly bothered by sensations from the outside world and internal bodily needs, and the mediate soul mediated between both.³⁴⁵ Human discursive reasoning was a faculty of the mediate soul as it received and perceived the images from the world of the senses, and it also received information from the higher soul, which told it how to judge the information it received. But discursive reasoning did not always follow the intellect's “recommendations,” and it sometimes directed its attention solely to the material world. From this, Plotinus believed that discursive reasoning by itself could not lead people to attain the real knowledge of the world of the forms, as it depended on the bodily senses and on images from the outside world.³⁴⁶ The only way to access the truth was through a complete alignment with the higher soul, and this implied no less than an escape from the body and its needs. The acts of eating, drinking, sleeping, and having sex betrayed the impotence of the human condition of having to be a slave to bodily needs, since humans could not do particularly without the first three. Only the soul contained God's truth at its very center, and the goal was to get to this center, by shunning the outside world and concentrating on an inner spiritual life of contemplation. Plotinus thus advocated for a purification of the body, which meant:

- to leave it alone and isolated, concerned with nothing outside itself and holding no alien impressions...so as to entertain no images nor build them into affections. And surely the

³⁴⁴Smith, Philosophy in Late Antiquity, 40-43.
³⁴⁵“as to our Soul, one part is for ever in contact with the Intelligible, one part concerned with this world of sense, and a third part hold a mediate position.” Plotinus Enneads 2.9.2.
³⁴⁶Smith, Philosophy in Late Antiquity, 7-14.
opposite tendency, the ascent from the lower to the higher reality, is the purification and separation of a soul divorcing itself from the body and disowning it? It is like a light emerging from the mists—yet untouched even when obscured. And the purification of the affective part is its awakening from frivolous images and their banishment from its sight, and its separation a reluctance to decline, a freedom from earthly imaginings. Separation might also mean the abolition of everything from which it distances itself, when the spiritual body in which it rests is not turbid from gluttony and a surfeit of unclean flesh, but a slender form, fit to convey it in tranquility.  

This love of soul and disregard of the body were not but a continuation of the development of a Socratic ethics of abstention, which required managing the body by barely satisfying its most basic needs. But the Socratic enkrateia and sōphrosynē were taken to an extreme in late antiquity. Likewise, the knowledge of the intelligible was not pursued as something to be applied in this world to the benefit of the community—as Plato envisioned—but as a reality that was preferable in itself to the miserable life of the third century Roman Empire. Neoplatonist philosophy was the most influential school of late antiquity, and it was the philosophy on which some of the most important theological doctrines of Christianity were framed.

The Triumph of Christianity

Emperor Constantine followed Diocletian's tetrarchic reign after he defeated his rival claimant Maxentius at the battle of Milvian Bridge in year 312. Believing that he counted with the support of the Christian God for achieving his victory, Constantine decided to put an end to the longstanding persecution of Christians—intensified during Diocletian's tenure—and proclaimed Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire when he became the sole

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347 Plotinus Enneads 3.6.5.
348 Gregory, Neoplatonists, 15.
350 Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 12, 211-212.
ruler.\textsuperscript{351} Thenceforth, Christianity became the dominant religion of Western Europe, and its sexual ethics were to influence Western sexual morality to these days. But the Christianity that Constantine defended was not extraneous to his time and place. It is believed that by the time Constantine declared a stop to the Christian persecutions, up to a twenty-five percent of the Eastern Empire's population was Christian, and this number would increase after the benefits that came from power were realized.\textsuperscript{352} From the time of Paul to Constantine, countless Christians had been persecuted and sentenced to be handled by the beasts for the enjoyment of the Roman crowds. The relentless will and fearlessness of martyrs like Justin and Perpetua, who did not abandon their faith even in the face of death, could also impress many Romans. They embodied the Stoic \textit{apatheia}, as they faced their deaths in a dignified way. Many Christians were also known for their sexual abstention, choosing to remain virgins for the rest of their lives. This perpetual virginity was in fact not common in the Roman Empire, where even their Vestal Virgins were not always chaste, but the ideal of sexual chastity became increasingly popular among philosophical circles that disdained the body.\textsuperscript{353}

The Christians of late antiquity were also deeply influenced by the philosophical schools of their time, particularly Platonism. Christian intercourse with Greek philosophy had not stopped with Paul, and by the second century groups of Christians formed their own interpretations of the world and the Scriptures. Some Christian Gnostics viewed Jesus as a non-incarnated \textit{logos}, only appearing to be human and not truly suffering at the cross.\textsuperscript{354} The

\textsuperscript{352}\textit{Ibid.}, 43.
\textsuperscript{354}According to the \textit{Apocalypse of Peter}: “The Savior said to me, 'He whom you saw being glad and laughing above the cross is the Living Jesus. But he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is his fleshy part, which is the substitute. They put to shame that which remained in his likeness. And look at him, and (look at) me!'” as quoted in Elaine Pagels, \textit{The Gnostic Gospels} (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 72. When dealing with Christians, the
Manicheans were a Christian group named after their founder Mani, who believed in a radical dualism where principles of light and darkness were in a constant battle. They thought that all matter was intrinsically evil, and that the world where humans lived was the creation of the Devil. Sex was the conduct through which human misery was prolonged, as it enabled the reproduction of the species and its continuation in the material world. Therefore, the Manicheans advocated for complete sexual abstinence for their leaders, and non-reproduction for their followers.355

The degradation of the body was also stressed by the desert monks of the third and fourth centuries, ascetic Christians who went to the desert to be disengaged from the world. Living under the harshest of physical conditions, the desert monks hoped to attain a closeness to God by maintaining a fully spiritual state of being.356 One of such monks was Evagrius Ponticus, born in the middle of the fourth century in the Roman province of Pontus.357 In Evagrius we can see the development of a Christian spirituality based on Neoplatonic noetic principles and Stoic cognitive impressions. Evagrius was particularly sensitive to the presence of demons, who always acted to tempt human beings to get them to be away from God. These demons existed in the sub lunar realm, and were particularly adept at knowing how to tempt humans by carefully monitoring their behavior from the air, and bringing up images in their souls that they knew would tempt them.358 In this way, the demons were an intrinsic part of the Stoic process of mental representations and value judgments, as they sometimes brought up phantasia to which Platonists could not conceive that the logos could ever be incarnated, and this was one of the greatest objections that they had against Christianity, see reference in Augustine City of God 10.29.

355Chadwick, Augustine, 11-14.
356Brown, Body and Society, 215-217;
357Bamberger, Introduction to Evagrius, The Praktikos, Chapters on Prayer, xxxv.
humans could assent to, and in this way sin. According to Evagrius there were eight types of phantasia, or thoughts brought up by demons “in which are included every thought. First is that of gluttony, then impurity, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and last of all, pride.”

The demon of impurity, much like the gluttony one, attacked the irrational concupiscent part of the human soul, which was closest to the human body and its desires. It “impels one to lust after bodies,” attacking more vehemently “those who practice continence, in the hope that they will give up their practice of this virtue.” Evagrius himself recorded some thoughts that were brought to his mind by the demon of fornication, taking “the form of a beautiful woman engaging us in serious conversation, while we wish to do evil and shameful things with her.”

To Evagrius and the desert fathers, the sex demon was not the vilest, or the most difficult to contain. It could be tamed by practicing continence of food and drink, which were thought to be the fuel for these thoughts. The demon of fornication was particularly dangerous for the younger novices, but a more advanced monk would be more concerned about the demons of anger and vainglory, who attacked the irascible part of the soul closer to the intellect. The demon of fornication could also tempt monks with other monks, as was the case of young Dorotheos of Gaza, who fell in love with another young monk. But the fact that Dorotheos's object of affection was another male did not seem to cause much surprise, as it came from the same devil of fornication that also tempted monks with women. The advice that Dorotheo received from his mentor shows that these weaknesses were to be expected from young people:

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359 The sin that a monk has particularly to watch out for is that of giving mental consent to some forbidden pleasure,” Evagrius The Praktikos 75.
360 Praktikos 6.
361 Ibid., 8.
362 Evagrius Antirrhetikos 2.36, as quoted in Brown, Body and Society, 374.
363a Intestinal rumbles, grumblings from empty stomachs and inflamed, parched lungs—do you suppose that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, received pleasures from such sounds? Of course not: the point is that abstinence helps preserve chastity...But hear what God thinks of the devil: “All his strength is in his loins, his power resides in his navel.” Jerome How to Live as a Nun in a Profligate Society 26.
364 Bunge, Dragon's Wine and Angel's Bread, 47.
Often, my brother, in my youth, I was violently tempted by the demon of fornication, and I fought hard with toil against my thoughts...And after I had done that for five years, God delivered me of it...365

Evagrius recommended “hunger, toil and solitude,” in order to “extinguish the flames of desire.”366

Nevertheless, not all thoughts were brought up by demons, and not all incorporeal beings were demons. Humans also counted with the support of angels, whom were “ministers and messengers, who are immortally blessed in the enjoyment of His unchangeable truth; and the directions which they in some ineffable way receive, they execute without delay or difficulty in the sensible and visible world.”367 Angels compelled humans to fight demons and do what was right, but ultimately it was up to humans to be able to distinguish between angels and demons, and they could only always do this when they achieved the state of apatheia.368 This state free of passions was a state of ultimate virtue, in which the monk was aligned with his intellect. When monks could pray and not be constantly bothered by the phantasia that demons threw at them, they were free and undisturbed to make their spirits ascent to God. This was the so wished escape of the soul into the intelligible, which was referred to as anachorēsis.369

The desert monks represented the ideal to which Christians aspired, an ideal of frugality and sexual abstinence which was gradually becoming the norm for anyone who decided to make his Christian faith a life-long vocation. More than the sexual act, now even sexual desire became problematic, and some Christians took extreme measures to deal with the problem. The great Platonist Christian Origen was so concerned about his sexual desires that he decided to castrate

365Brown, Body and Society, 234.
366Evagrius The Praktikos 15.
367Augustine City of God 10.15.
368Bunge, Dragon's Wine and Angel's Bread, 45; “we recognize the indications of apatheia by our thoughts during the day, but we recognize it by our dreams during the night. We call apatheia the health of the soul.”Praktikos 56.
369Ibid., 52, 63-70; Evagrius Chapters on Prayers 75.
himself, so as not to be afflicted by them any longer. Origen's example may have been deemed radical, but other Christians also went to extreme pains so as not to feel sexual temptations.

Jerome the Great, translator of the Bible into Latin, advocated for the mortification of the body in order to tame sexual temptation. In his famous letter to the nun Eustochium, Jerome expressed:

> The Apostle teaches us to mortify our organs and limbs while they are on earth...Whoever abases his body, and knows this world is only vanity as he walks through it, is not afraid to say that he is like “the wineskin shriveled by frost,” for whatever moisture of lust in him has been evaporated.

Jerome differed from Evagrius, in that he considered that it was very difficult to get rid of sexual temptation. Even “hunger, toil, and solitude” could not chase away the demon of fornication.

When describing his own experience in the desert, Jerome remembered being

> condemned to this prison, my sole companions being wild beasts and scorpions. Often, however, a chorus of dancing girls cavorted around me. Emaciated, pale, my limbs cold as ice, still my mind boiled with desire. Lust's fires bubbled about me even when my flesh was as good as dead.

For Jerome, sex no longer required the self-control of an enkratos, who could micromanage and sublimate it. In Plato, the sexual desire that a lover felt for his beloved was considered something good, as it could lead to the love of higher things. Christians thought otherwise. Sexual desire was too powerful to be contained by a mere human being. It was a constant threat brought about by demons to the spirituality of any pious Christian, as it dragged souls away from God, in contemplation of bodies from the world of the senses. As such, sexual desire was not a good thing under any circumstances, and only the grace of God could help any person exterminate it.

Perhaps no one better than Augustine personified the struggles that sexual desire could cause in the life of an educated man from the fourth century. After reading Cicero's *Hortensius* when he was nineteen years old, Augustine realized that there was more to life than the world of

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the senses. Cicero's book led him to a path that would eventually direct Augustine to the
Christian God:

This book, in truth, changed my affections, and turned my prayers to Thyself, O Lord, and made me have other hopes and desires. Worthless suddenly became every vain hope to me; and, with an incredible warmth of heart, I yearned for an immortality of wisdom, and began now to arise that I might return to Thee. 373

Thenceforth, Augustine embarked on a journey of self-discovery, which would lead him to embrace different otherworldly philosophies and religions such as Manicheism and Neoplatonism. 374 Along the way, Augustine also considered the philosophy of the skeptic “Academics,” but he was dissatisfied with their notion that nothing could be learned for certain, and preferred a more dogmatic philosophy of truth. 375 Nevertheless, none of these philosophies ultimately helped Augustine abandon his need for sex, which seemed to have become problematic for him ever since he became educated.

Augustine was a young adult from the north African provincial town of Thagaste, today in Tunisia, and his talents along with his family's efforts enabled him to get an education and teach rhetoric. Although he never married, he had a concubine from his small town with whom he was united for many years until he converted to Christianity. Augustine's concubine bore him a son, and was a faithful companion in his journeys, but her mere presence was a source of temptation with which the Christian philosopher permanently struggled. 376 All of the philosophies to which Augustine adhered stressed the need for continence. The Manicheans considered sexual desire as coming straight from the devil, and Neoplatonists like Plotinus and Porphyry practiced abstinence to purify their souls and be more receptive to the intelligible

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373 Augustine Confessions 3.4.7.
374 Chadwick, Augustine, 9-14.
375 Augustine Confessions 6.11.18.
376 Ibid, 2.3.5-8; Chadwick, Augustine, 6-7, 10-11.
world. None of these philosophies ultimately helped Augustine quit his concubine and the life of sexual pleasures. He wanted to quit, but he could not bring himself to do it: “my old mistresses, still enthralled me; they shook my fleshly garment, and whispered softly, 'Dost thou part with us? And from that moment shall we no more be with thee for ever?'” Only a miracle could help Augustine, and this occurred after his conversion to Christianity:

I flung myself down, how, I know not, under a certain fig-tree, giving free course to my tears, and the streams of mine eyes gushed out, an acceptable sacrifice unto Thee. And, not indeed in these words, yet to this effect, spake I much unto Thee,—“But Thou, O Lord, how long?” “How long, Lord? Wilt Thou be angry for ever? Oh, remember not against us former iniquities;” for I felt that I was enthralled by them. I sent up these sorrowful cries,—“How long, how long? Tomorrow, and to-morrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?”

And after opening his Bible randomly, Augustine received his message in Romans 13: “Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” This instance marked Augustine for life, as he decided to live a life of continence and call off the marriage that his mother had arranged for him.

It is evident that sexual desire occupied a central role in the life of Augustine. His contempt for it was tightly linked to his beliefs in the otherworldly, beliefs which were Platonic in nature. The material world had no longer much to offer to Augustine, as he explained in his City of God:

it is not in view of terrestrial and temporal benefits, which divine providence grants promiscuously to good and evil, that God is to be worshipped, but in view of eternal life,

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377 Ibid, 11, 17-21. 378 Ibid, 8.11.26. 379 Ibid. 8.12.28. 380 Ibid., 8.12.29. 381 “Augustine certainly thought authentic Christianity otherworldly. It derived its reference-points and criteria from considerations beyond the process of time and history. Though convinced that this world is God’s world, he did not believe that human life can belong wholly to the secular and material order, or that the primary values can be power, honour, wealth and sex,” Chadwick, Augustine, 119.
everlasting gifts, and of the society of the heavenly city itself.\textsuperscript{383}

In a time when the Vandals were approaching North Africa, and when the mighty city of Rome had been sacked for the first time in centuries, many pagans were blaming the new Christian religion as responsible for the miseries.\textsuperscript{384} Augustine wrote his \textit{City of God} partly in answer to these accusations, and partly to stress the insignificance of men's earthly life as compared to the world of the intelligible. The \textit{City of God} was akin to the Platonic realm of the forms, immaterial and perfect, with no place for human bodies, but only for pure souls. Only a few faithful human souls were predestined through God's grace to participate in this eternal city, after their bodies perished. The city was also inhabited by angels, passionless souls higher than demons, whom knew God's \textit{logos} and ministered his miracles to human beings on Earth. God ruled this perfect city of eternal happiness and peace, which contrasted with the turmoil of the fifth century Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{385}

Augustine's conception of love also reflected the superiority of the noetic realm. Like Plato, Augustine referred to love as originating from the beauty of physical forms, which led to the love of beauty itself.\textsuperscript{386} But true love could not be found in the world of the senses, as beauty faded and things perished. This Augustine experienced himself when his intimate friend from youth suddenly died. Later the Christian philosopher understood that only the love of God led to true happiness, as it was eternal and superior to anything anyone could experience in life.\textsuperscript{387} But the love of God could only be experienced through his grace. God's grace was a gift that he gave only to a small number of elected people. It was impossible for any human to receive God's

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{383} Augustine \textit{City of God} 5.18.
\item \textsuperscript{384} "Thus escaped multitudes who now reproach the Christian religion, and impute to Christ the ills that have befallen their city..." Augustine \textit{City of God} 1.1.
\item \textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 11.1, 4, 9, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{386} Augustine \textit{Confessions} 4.13.20; 8.17-8.23-4.
\item \textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 4.9.14.
\end{itemize}
grace and reject it, because this was an irresistible stimulus, similar to falling in love with someone. In this way, true love and grace went hand in hand, and one could not achieve one without the other.\footnote{Cary, Inner Grace, 15-6.}

In the absence of love and grace, humans were left to love the things of the world of the senses, which led to sin. Lust was a byproduct of this lack of grace. It stemmed from the lack of a correct theological understanding, from humans not being in a state of grace. In this way, Augustine followed a conception almost identical to Paul, and to traditional Greek philosophical understandings of nature and the cosmic order. This was the state in which Augustine found himself before he converted to Christianity, and it was exactly why he could not quit his sexual temptations before becoming a Christian.\footnote{Ibid., 6.11.20.} Only through God's grace could someone expect to achieve the gift of continence; \textit{enkrateia} no longer applied:

As regards continence, I imagined it to be under the control of our own strength (though in myself I found it not), being so foolish as not to know what is written, that none can be continent unless Thou give it, and that Thou wouldst give it, if with heartfelt groaning I should knock at Thine ears, and should with firm faith cast my care upon Thee.\footnote{Ibid., 13.1-2, 13.}

But there was a reason why humans could not achieve continence by their own power, and this was intrinsic to the human condition. All human beings were born with \textit{original sin}, a product of Adam's sin of disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden. The punishment for this sin was human mortality, and its most visible sign was the sexual act.\footnote{Ibid., 13.1-2, 13.} The first thing that Adam and Eve noticed after they ate from the forbidden fruit was their nakedness, and Augustine interpreted that Adam also noticed an erection, which caused him embarrassment and prompted him to cover himself. From then on, human beings would not be able to control their sexual

\footnote{Ibid., 6.11.20.}
members according to reason, using them only for procreation. Inordinate lust prompted the male erection, whether this erection was desired or not.\textsuperscript{392} This is something Augustine may have known all too well, particularly at the time when he wanted to quit sex and could not from the temptation that his concubine represented to him. Evidence for the inherent sinfulness of sex was all around, and people needed not look far to realize that:

even the procreation of children, whenever this process is approached, secrecy is sought, witnesses are removed, and even the presence of the very children who happen to be born of the process is avoided as soon as they reach the age of observation.\textsuperscript{393}

The lust that humans experienced was no longer natural and applied in order to ensure the survival of the species—as former Stoic philosophers had maintained,—rather it was occasioned by demons whose only goal was the perversion of human lives, and the corruption of society.\textsuperscript{394}

As a consequence of the sinful condition of sex, perpetual virginity was stressed as the ideal condition for the human race. Now even marriage and reproduction came under scrutiny, and virginity was to be preferred over them. Jerome thus stated: “I praise matrimony. But only because it produces virgins.”\textsuperscript{395} According to Augustine marriage was good and sex within it not necessarily sinful, but virginity was a gift from God, which made the possessors “chosen among the chosen.”\textsuperscript{396} Virgins were so special, that they ran the risk of losing humility from having this inherent superiority over other mortals.\textsuperscript{397} Virgins also expected to reap better eternal rewards in heaven. Augustine stated that “The joys peculiar to Christ's virgins are not the same as those of non-virgins, though these too are of Christ; for there are different joys for different persons, but

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\bibitem{392} Augustine \textit{The Grace of Christ and Original Sin} 2.39.
\bibitem{393} Ibid., 2.42.
\bibitem{394} “it was the gods who by their malign craft instilled into the minds of men the conceptions from which such dreadful vices branched out on all sides...” Augustine \textit{Confessions} 2.18.
\bibitem{395} Jerome \textit{How to Live as a Nun in a Profligate Society} 36. Jerome had also referred to second marriages as being one step away from the brothel, see Brown, \textit{Body and Society}, 377.
\bibitem{396} Augustine \textit{The Good of Marriage} 8; Augustine \textit{On Holy Virginity} 40.
\bibitem{397} Ibid., 41.
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no others obtain such as these." But marriage and reproduction were only good for the people who could not contain themselves, following Paul's adage that "it is better to marry than to burn." Theologians who did not adhere to the superiority of virginity quickly came under heavy fire from the Church fathers. Jovinian, who maintained on Old Testament grounds that Christian married people who had sex were no less than virgins, was heavily criticized by Jerome, who labeled him "the Epicurus of Christianity." Augustine was no more kind in his answers to Pelagius, who asserted human free will and criticized original sin.

Given these beliefs about the inherent sinfulness of sex, same-sex sexual relations had no room for any of the Church fathers. Augustine did not address the subject too often, as if it was something which did not concern him much, but when he referred to these relations, he did so under Pauline terms. For Augustine same-sex relations, like lustful sex in general, stemmed from the lack of a proper theological understanding. He saw it as one of the many 'immoralities' that occurred in societies which embraced the luxuries and pleasures of the world, and remained ignorant of the one "true" God. Rome after the conquest of Carthage had become such a society, too wealthy and powerful to be morally sound. The 'immoralities' that the Romans committed were imported from Greece, and encouraged by the Roman gods, whom Augustine considered to be demons. In his City of God, Augustine referred to the nefarious consequences that building a theatre had for Rome, and why Scipio had opposed the project so vehemently. He stated:

(Scipio) in a very weighty speech warned them against allowing the luxurious manners of Greece to sap the Roman manliness, and persuaded them not to yield to the enervating and emasculating influence of foreign licentiousness....For there had not yet been revealed to the Gentiles the heavenly doctrine which should purify their hearts by faith,
and transform their natural disposition by humble godliness, and turn them from the service of proud devils to seek the things that are in heaven, or even above the heavens.  

As Paul and Philo had done before, Augustine linked passive males with pagan religion, noticing how some of the various pagan cults used male prostitutes, thus promoting these practices. This 'unholy' alliance between passive male prostitutes and pagan rites illustrated the licentiousness of the Roman gods, who enjoyed being worshipped in such a way, proving that they were not gods, but demons. About these 'demons,' Augustine stated:

in whatever way their sacred rites may be interpreted, and whatever reference they may have to the nature of things, it is not according to nature, but contrary to nature, that men should be effemmates. This disease, this crime, this abomination, has a recognised place among those sacred things, though even depraved men will scarcely be compelled by torments to confess they are guilty of it.

Same-sex relations also went against nature, because they went against God's intended purposes in his creation of men and women. In Augustine's mind, nature was synonymous to God's laws, and every human vice by definition went against nature. Same-sex relations disrupted the healthy functioning of the human soul, by stemming from an inordinate lust proceeding from the irrational part of the soul, which overpowered the rational soul that contained God's laws. In doing so, people engaging in same-sex relations set themselves apart from God. Augustine interpreted the Old Testament story of Sodom as God's punishment to this “vice,” indicating that:

those offenses which be contrary to nature are everywhere and at all times to be held in

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403 Augustine City of God 1.31.
404 Ibid., 6.8. I interpret Augustine to be referring to only passive males in this passage from his usage of terms such as 'effeminate' and his reference to the condition as a 'disease,' which, as discussed before, was characteristic of medical theories about passivity in males. He also seemed to be counting on wide agreement for his value judgment, by stating how “even depraved men” would not admit to it. Passivity in males, and not so much activity, had such strong connotations attached to it throughout antiquity.
405 For that nature is certainly praised, the fault of which is justly blamed...And thus, since every vice is an injury of the nature, that very vice of the wicked angels, their departure from God, is sufficient proof that God created their nature so good, that it is an injury to it not to be with God.” Ibid., 12.1.
406 But Thou avengest that which men perpetrate against themselves, seeing also that when they sin against Thee, they do wickedly against their own souls,” Augustine Confessions 3.8.16.
detestation and punished; such were those of the Sodomites, which should all nations commit, they should all be held guilty of the same crime by the divine law, which hath not so made men that they should in that way abuse one another. For even that fellowship which should be between God and us is violated, when that same nature of which He is author is polluted by the perversity of lust.\(^{407}\)

In condemning same-sex relations, Augustine made the same distinction that Philo had made between penetrator and penetrated, by denouncing the first for “‘burning’ in things forbidden to that use which is against nature,” and condemning the second for “corrupting or perverting their nature, which Thou hast made and ordained.”\(^{408}\) But Augustine may have had something else to say about non-sexual same-sex relationships. The intimate affection that Augustine felt for his friend from youth was very passionate, and his untimely death made Augustine contemplate suicide:

Thus I was miserable, and that life of misery I accounted dearer than my friend. For though I would willingly have changed it, yet I was even more unwilling to lose it than him; yea, I knew not whether I was willing to lose it even for him, as is handed down to us (if not an invention) of Pylades and Orestes, that they would gladly have died one for another, or both together, it being worse than death to them not to live together...I suppose, the more I loved him, so much the more did I hate and fear, as a most cruel enemy, that death which had robbed me of him...For I was astonished that other mortals lived, since he whom I loved, as if he would never die, was dead; and I wondered still more that I, who was to him a second self, could live when he was dead.\(^{409}\)

Intimate relationships of this kind between men were something common throughout the Middle Ages, and it is up for debate whether they included any sexual components. Nevertheless, they did seem to entail a great deal of closeness and shared emotions, but ancient intimate male friendships may still be too difficult to decipher for the modern eye.\(^{410}\)

It is clear that in considering the question of sex in general, and same-sex relations in particular, Augustine relied on divine laws of an intelligible world, and not on the Stoic laws of

\(^{407}\text{Ibid., 3.8.15.}\)
\(^{408}\text{Ibid., 3.8.16.}\)
\(^{409}\text{Ibid., 5.6.11. Also see 5.6.12-14 for more descriptions of the intense feelings that Augustine had for his friend.}\)
\(^{410}\text{For further reference on intimate relationships see Ruth Mazo-Karras, }\textit{Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others} (New York: Routledge, 2005), 54-57.\)
the physical cosmos. Augustine's antagonism to sex stemmed from an otherworldly vision of the cosmos, which contemplated imagined realities more than the ones that were at hand. In this, Augustine did not differ from his other Neoplatonist contemporaries. Late antiquity was steeped into these kinds of beliefs, where angels and demons were realities with which people contended on a daily bases, and the soul was as real as the modern brain and its functions. Augustine's sexual morality also represented a more radical continuation of the Socratic ethics of *enkrateia* and *sōphrosynē*. This the Christian philosopher readily admitted himself, stating that Socrates is said to have been the first who directed the entire effort of philosophy to the correction and regulation of manners...For he saw that the causes of things...to be ultimately reducible to nothing else than the will of the one true and supreme God,—and on this account he thought (that the causes of nature) could only be comprehended by a purified mind; and therefore that all diligence ought to be given to the purification of the life by good morals, in order that the mind, delivered from the depressing weight of lusts, might raise itself upward by its native vigour to eternal things, and might, with purified understanding, contemplate that nature which is incorporeal and unchangeable light, where live the causes of all created natures.

Virginity was exalted to such a high point, that even marriage and reproduction were seen as lesser goods that could be entirely dispensed of. When Augustine was confronted about the logic of living in a world entirely made up of virgins where the human race could not reproduce, Augustine answered: “then the city of God would be filled much more speedily, and the end of the world would be hastened.”

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411 Chadwick has expressed that “Augustine certainly thought authentic Christianity otherworldly. It derived its reference-points and criteria from considerations beyond the process of time and history. Though convinced that this world is God's world, he did not believe that human life can belong wholly to the secular and material order, or that the primary values can be power, honour, wealth and sex. Cicero had indelibly printed on his mind that they can be no road to happiness, either for the individual or for society.” Chadwick, *Augustine*, 119.

412 Augustine *City of God* 8.3.

413 Augustine *The Good of Marriage* 10.
A trained historian is always advised to be careful about extrapolating ideas from the past to be applied to radically different modern circumstances. I think that this caveat should also be extended to the rest of the lay population. Anti-gay apologists who argue that same-sex sexuality goes against nature are not saying anything new. As seen, this argument has been around for a long time and taken on many influential philosophies. Plato seemed to be more concerned with his realm of the intelligible than with nature, and his criticism of male same-sex sexuality was based on his conceptions of the abstract ideas of beauty, goodness and the true. Still, Plato did take into account the natural world when he criticized same-sex relations. On the other hand, the Roman Stoics considered the material world to be already the perfect world that Plato envisioned. They saw the hand of God in everything that happened in nature, and to them, animal behavior could be evidence of the most basic laws of nature. As they did not observe same-sex relations in nature, some Romans thought that these were excluded from the divine legislation. Both Plato and the Stoics adhered to the belief of an intelligent design of the cosmos, which ruled everything according to divine principles which were also to guide human behavior, and same-sex relations, to them, went against and beyond this design.

It may sound simplistic to say that Plato and the Stoics were wrong in their observations of nature, since they did not have the technology and centuries of research that we in our time

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414 Plato Laws 840d-e.
415 Pseudo-Lucian Affairs of the Heart 22; Epictetus Discourses 1.6.9 as cited in Niko Huttunen “Stoic Law in Paul?” 50.
have at our disposal. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Plato and the Stoics were wrong about nature, and it is important to point this out, as their negative conceptions of male same-sex sexuality were partly based on this flawed knowledge. Modern scientific understandings point to a materialistic world where the laws of natural phenomena do not seem to correlate with desirable human behavior (how could the law of gravity guide moral choices?). Since the times of Plato, scientists have discovered that the planet Earth is not at the center of the universe, that it rotates around the sun and not the other way around, and that it is but a speck in an immense and ever expanding universe.\(^{416}\) The ancient philosopher who might have gotten closer to modern scientific knowledge was at the same time the one most despised by Platonists, Stoics and Christians. Indeed, Epicurus did refer to a non-teleological materialistic world made up of atoms, but Epicureanism had died by late antiquity.\(^{417}\) What is more, the theory of evolution—massively accepted by modern scientists today—contradicts the old-age notion of a perfect and unchanged natural design in which humans were placed at its center.\(^{418}\) It is now known that human beings were apes, sharing a common primate ancestor with other higher apes such as the chimpanzee and the gorilla, and were far from ruling even their own smaller African environment. Life on Earth evolved in a slow process which took billions of years, according to the principles of random mutation and natural selection, and the spectacular development of the human species only took place relatively very recently.\(^{419}\)

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\(^{418}\) Richard Dawkins has stated that “Darwinian evolution, specifically natural selection...shatters the illusion of design within the domain of biology, and teaches us to be suspicious of any kind of design hypothesis in physics and cosmology as well,” Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: A Mariner Book, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 143.

\(^{419}\) In reference to the genealogy of the human species, Darwin has stated “The most ancient progenitors in the kingdom of the Vertebrata, at which we are able to obtain an obscure glance, apparently consisted of a group of
Flawed were also Platonic and Stoic conceptions of animal sexuality. The chaste and monogamous birds to which Plato referred in his *Laws* are sometimes not exactly what the Greek philosopher envisioned:

Wattled jacanas from the Chagres River in Panama are large, squat black birds with white wing tips, a red face, and a long, yellow probing bill used to feed among shallow freshwater plants like hyacinths...DNA fingerprinting has shown that males raise eggs laid by the female who controls their harem, *even when the eggs were fathered by males outside the harem* (my emphasis).420

Plato's point about birds can still be taken, as up to a ninety percent of bird species seem to be monogamous. Nevertheless, this situation does not transfer to mammals, where ninety percent of its species are *non-monogamous*.421 What is more, “homosexual”422 behavior seems to be present in a great number of animal species, particularly in mammals. Biologist Joan Roughgarden identified no less than *one hundred* mammalian species which exhibit some kind of same-sex behavior. Among some, there are the:

White-tailed deer, black-tailed deer, red deer (also called elk), reindeer, moose, giraffes, pronghorns, kobs, waterbucks, blackbucks, Thomson's gazelles, Grant's gazelles, musk
oxen, mountain goats, American bison, mountain zebras, warthogs, collared peccaries, vicuñas (la llama), African elephants, and Asiatic elephants...lions, cheetahs, red foxes, wolves, grizzly bears, black bears, and spotted hyenas...The grey kangaroo, red-necked wallaby, whiptail wallaby, rat kangaroo, Doria's kangaroo, Matschie's kangaroo, koala, dunnart, and quoll...The red squirrel, least chipmunk, olympic marmot, hoary marmot, dwarf cavy, yellow-toothed cavy, wild cavy, long-eared hedgehog, grey-headed flying fox, Livingstone's fruit bat, and vampire bat...The bottlenose dolphin, spinner dolphin, Amazon river dolphin, killer whale, gray whale, bowhead whale, right whale, grey seal, elephant seal, harbor seal, Australian sea lion, New Zealand sea lion, northern fur seal, walrus, and West Indian manatee...423

Same-sex sexual behavior seems to be as prevalent—if not more—among our closest relatives, the higher apes. Bonobos, baboons, gibbons, gorillas, and orangutans all like to “get freaky” with other apes of their same-sex. What is more, same-sex relations seem to be an important part of their social structures. Bonobos have sex after sharing food, for conflict resolution, and to help integrate new arrivals to their group and form coalitions.424 Roughgarden adduced this social characteristic of sex to why natural selection did not get rid of homosexual behavior in animals. In complex animal societies such as that of the bonobo chimpanzee, homosexuality offers a strategy for higher survival through friendship. This behavior in turn gets preserved in the genes as a “social-inclusionary trait,” in what Roughgarden labeled the “congenial gene.” This might be why the female bonobo exhibits a frontal vulva and clitoris, which enables the rubbing of other such parts. In like manner, the female spotted hyena counts with protruding genitalia in the shape of a penis, which also enables easier contact with other females.425

But of course, the most obvious case of all might be that of homosexuality in the human species, which is—and seems to always have been—very prevalent. Even in the midst of the red scare, a brutally oppressive time for sexual diversity in the United States, sexologist Alfred

423Ibid., 140-141.
424Ibid., 148-153.
425Here Roughgarden is in direct opposition to Darwin's theory of sexual selection, and the traditional view in her field that homosexuality was neutral in nature, surviving as such. Roughgarden argues that homosexual behavior has positive contributions to the survival of certain species, and this is why it has survived to our times. Ibid., 6, 148-157, 175-181.
Kinsey found no less than a thirty-seven percent of his male sample to have enjoyed orgasms with other men.\footnote{Kinsey, \textit{Sexual Behavior in the Human Male}, 623.} Today, we talk less about homosexuality and more about queerness, as there are so many different ways in which people experience their gender and sexual orientation. There are gays, lesbians, bisexuals, pansexuals, asexuals, heterosexuals, bi-curious, fetishists, transgenders, genderqueers, transvestites, drag queens, and the list goes on.\footnote{Pansexual refers to a potential attraction to all possible sexes and genders, including transgender; genderqueer refers to a gender identity not strictly identified with either pole of the gender binary masculine-feminine.} This current diversity also serves as a reminder about the differences that exist between modern and past populations in their gender and sexual expressions. As noted in the introductory chapter, the word “homosexual” does not seem to do justice to the experience of people attracted to their same-sex in the times of Plato or Augustine. Ancient pederasty often implied a difference in age, power, and sex-role between the lovers, and anal penetration was deemed problematic in philosophical circles. In Rome, the non-egalitarian characteristic of these relationships was so strong that male same-sex relations only seemed to be justified with slaves and prostitutes. This was the “homosexuality” with which Plato and the Roman Stoics were acquainted, and their criticism was in part directed at their contemporary pederastic social structure.\footnote{Halperin, \textit{One Hundred Years}, 116.}

But arguably the most influential theoretical framework behind the notion that same-sex relations went against nature was the Socratic ethics of abstention. Based on a flawed natural teleology, the Socratic ethics of abstention sought to regulate pleasure through the abstention of food, drink and sex. This model of sexual regulation was very popular among ancient moralists, and it also influenced Christian theologians. Same-sex sexuality seemed to offer more pleasure than what was the acceptable minimum, and it did not seem to serve any pragmatic function other than self-indulgence. Plato seemed to be the first to attack male same-sex relations on these
bases, but he would be followed centuries later by the Roman Stoics and the Christians, who took the Socratic abstinent model to an extreme. No longer caring about the material world or the survival of their species, Christians sought virginity as a most perfect state of being. They looked down even on reproductive sex, and despised same-sex relations. It was under the Christian Emperor Theodosius when the first burnings for same-sex behavior took place, and Christian opposition to homosexual behavior continues to our days.\footnote{Vern N. Bullough, “The Sin Against Nature and Homosexuality,” in \textit{Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church}, ed. Vern Bullough and James Brundage (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), 58.}

Currently, there seems to be an environment of more tolerance toward sexual minorities in the industrialized nations of the world. Nevertheless, the bullying of sexual minorities continues in the high schools of the United States, a situation which is taking an unprecedented number of lives from teen-suicides. Uganda seems on track to implementing their genocidal anti-gay law, and millions of LGBTQ people around the world still have to hide their identity for fear of discrimination and related abuses.\footnote{David Crary, “Suicide Surge: Schools Confront Anti-Gay Bullying,” \textit{The Associated Press}, October 9, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39593311/ns/us_news-life/t/suicide-surge-schools-confront-anti-gay-bullying/#.To4zMnM78qQ; Simon Sarmiento, “Uganda's anti-gay bill is far from dead,” \textit{The Guardian}, May 11, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/may/11/uganda-anti-gay-bill.} And there no longer are—not that there ever was—any seemingly logical justifications for these events. We know nature better today than at any other point in our history, and we can confidently assert that same-sex relations are perfectly natural. However, debates about the legitimization of same-sex behavior still rage around the world, and the romantic and sexual lives of hundreds of millions of people are still being scrutinized. I hope to contribute to ending the debate, so that the rights that people have to their own consensual sexual and romantic lives are no longer a matter of ill-informed public opinion.
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Scriptures

The following passages used in this thesis are from the New International Version.

Genesis 1:27
Genesis 2:7
Leviticus 1:3-6
Leviticus 11:13-19
Leviticus 13:49-52
Leviticus 15:16-24
Leviticus 18:22
Leviticus 19:19
Leviticus 20:13
Exodus 20:14
Romans 1:18-28
Romans 3:22
Romans 3:29-30
Romans 12:4-5
Romans 12:15
1 Corinthians 6:18-20
Galatians 5:24


Secondary Sources


