

## *Human sexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality, or who can defeat 300 Spartans?*

It is becoming increasingly obvious that human sexuality is much more than a mere tool for procreation. Contrary to the popular misconception that humans develop their sexuality during the puberty, humans have sexual desires from the moment of their birth. Some suggest that even while in the mother's womb a baby is already having orgasms. Humans can also have lifelong desires towards the individuals of the same sex, or sometimes even towards inanimate objects, which does not make any sense in procreation.

Hardly any other sphere of human psychology and behaviour commands such widespread public and scholarly interest as sex, and yet it is still so badly understood. Even after the Freudian theory, which put sexuality in the very centre of human psychology, the famous Kinsky Report came as a shock to many. For us the principal question is whether sex was a vehicle for competition between humans for mates and procreation (Darwin, Miller), or if sex was a tool for cooperation between the early hominid and human groups until the late introduction of monogamous families. American Evolutionary biologist Joan Roughgarden proposed that sex was primarily used for social cohesion, and even suggested the original altruistic model of "social selection" which she believes should replace the selfish model of "sexual selection" (Roughgarden, 2004). She was severely criticized by colleagues but it is certainly true that love is probably the most altruistic emotion, a cornerstone of human sociality. It is not accidental that in all religions the climax of religious feel is presented and described as "love." I do not want to go into details of this incredibly interesting sphere, but in relation to our subject I propose that the intense feel of attachment that love produces between humans has very strong connections to the powerful state of the battle trance. The issues of homosexuality and bisexuality are of crucial importance to this discussion – let me briefly address them.

As a young person raised in the largely homophobic Soviet Union, where homosexuality was a criminal offence, I also considered that sex between individuals of different sexes was the only normal and natural way of interaction. Sexual arousal between the individuals of the same gender seemed a dead end for survival and an unjustified waste of human feelings. This logic seemed so obvious that hardly any argument was given – because of this homosexuality seemed like a corruption of nature. As part of the Soviet intelligentsia, I was against the criminal charges that

state put on homosexuals, but still considered it to be somewhat against the “rules” of nature.

Much later, after my migration to Australia and the widening of my spheres of interest into evolutionary topics, I found out that this simply was not true. Plenty of animal species are apparently engaged in homosexual relationships. Elephants, penguins, bison, giraffes, foxes, dogs, cattle, goats, horses, domestic cats, lions, chimpanzees and bonobos, dolphins, and whales are only a few representatives of the strong list of 500 species that definitely exhibit homosexual behaviours. A larger list of about 1000 more animal species may soon be added to the list of confirmed homosexually-behaving species. This list includes not only mammals, but also fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and insects (Bagemihl, 1999). These findings shatter the “Sex for procreation only” idea to the very core. How can animals be homosexuals and waste their precious energy and resources on such an evolutionarily useless thing as homosexuality? Possibly with animal homosexuality we are dealing with only several individuals who do not represent a healthy portion of the population? No, we are talking about the behaviour of absolutely healthy animals – the whole species, not just deranged individuals. Homosexuality is present in every phylum of life, making this behaviour well-established and absolutely “natural” for natural world. The idea of calling something “unnatural” when most of the natural world is engaged in this kind of behaviour is against the primary law of science – the law of accepting existing facts.

The presence of homosexual behaviour among animals was mostly neglected for many decades. It was not until the 1990s that scholars started noticing the widespread presence of homosexual behaviour in the natural world (Bagemihl, 1999; Terry, 2000). It seems quite safe to propose that our knowledge of the homosexual behaviour in animals will rapidly progress during the next few decades. It is therefore likely that there will be many more animal species to “come out of closet” of homosexuality and join the growing list of homosexual animals.

Here we must make a very important correction. I probably should have said from the very beginning that it is not homosexuality that is so prevalent among animals, but rather **bisexuality**. All these lions, elephants, penguins and cats as a rule are interested in sexual partnership both with individuals of the same and different sexes.

Another quite amazing fact about animal sexual relationships is that for many animals, homosexual relationships seem to be much more important in their life than their straight heterosexual relationships. Elephants are an excellent example for this. When male elephants are in a homosexual relationship together, they form an intense friendship that can last for their whole lives. On the contrary, the same male elephant’s interaction with fertile females has a very fleeting nature and it is over basically when the heat is over. As a result, male elephants are much closer to their homosexual partners than to their female mates. The social function of sex in such species is virtually impossible to reject. A crucially important characteristic of

homosexual behaviour is that it is prevalent amongst social animals, particularly with birds and mammals.

Raising questions over the historical and even causal link between sexual reproduction and the establishment of social bonds seems to me very natural. It seems to me that there is a good reason to believe that forging social bonds through physical contact between living organisms could have been the initial force that later gave rise to sexual means of reproduction. First and foremost we need to take into account that sociality and grouping was present (and is still present) among the most primitive living organisms, unicellular prokaryotes, species like bacteria, who lived hundreds of millions years before the appearance of the most primitive cellular organisms (eukaryotes) and long before the sexual means of reproduction. Prokaryotes, the most primitive known living organisms, show complex social behaviour when they are in groups (Connell et al., 2010). See, for example, what West et al., wrote in 2007: "Our understanding of the social lives of microbes has been revolutionized over the past 20 years. It used to be assumed that bacteria and other microorganisms lived relatively independent unicellular lives, without the cooperative behaviours that have provoked so much interest in mammals, birds, and insects. However, a rapidly expanding body of research has completely overturned this idea, showing that microbes indulge in a variety of social behaviours involving complex systems of cooperation, communication, and synchronization." Therefore, social behaviour is by no means an exclusive characteristic to higher forms of life but on the contrary, sociality was present in the most primitive life forms that were formed on earth some 3.5 billion years ago. And let me repeat once again: sexual division did not exist at that stage of evolution.

The presence of sociality among the most primitive life forms of our planet provides strong support to the suggestion that sociality and bonding played a crucial role for the later development of sexual reproduction. The appearance of this "sex out of bonding," or if you like this way more - "bonking for bonding" hypothesis seems inevitable to me.

Let us return to human sexuality. It is still difficult to discuss this topic in its entirety and to identify the objective nature of human sexual preferences, as in some countries homosexual relationships are still a criminal offence and people committing this crime are put to death. We need to remember that all major western religions ban homosexuality as an unnatural, immoral activity. Even in the contemporary western society, where homosexuality and bisexuality have become more or less accepted, it is still viewed with a certain awkward social taboo. I remember when our conservative American acquaintance complained that the new democrat president of the United States (Bill Clinton) allowed homosexuals to enter American army in 1993. The conservative opinion, expressed by our guest, was that this would soon have disastrous consequences for the health and fighting spirit of the American armed forces.

If any readers of this book also think that allowing homosexuality among combatants can degrade the warriors' fighting spirit, I would like to remind them

that many of the most successful warriors of human history were confirmed homosexuals, and that there were armies that were using homosexuality as a method with which to boost the fighting morale of the members. Sound unbelievable? Here are the facts. Arguably the most dedicated human warriors from the Ancient Greek history, the “Sacred Band of Thebes” consisted of 150 homosexual couples (300 warriors). So in order to become a member of their elite corps, a warrior had to have a homosexual lover – absolutely no straight warriors were allowed! And what was the result of this kind of policy, could they fight efficiently? Oh yes, they could fight.

The amazing force of the Sacred Band of Thebe warriors was tested against some of the toughest opponents in the history of human warfare: the elite Spartan warriors in the height of Spartan military hegemony. The soldiers of Thebes and Sparta were in opposing camps during the Hellenic Wars for hegemony, and they had to face each other in mortal combat. The Theban warriors had two engagements against the Spartans which were crucial for Ancient Greece. In the first encounter, the battle of Tegyra (375 BC) the Thebans defeated the Spartan army. Even more sensationally, the Spartan army had out-numbered the Thebans 2-1. This battle had a tremendous symbolic significance in ancient history as the Spartans had never been defeated before in such circumstances. This is what the flabbergasted Plutarch wrote about this battle in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of “Pelopidas”:

“For in all the great wars there had ever been against Greeks or barbarians, the Spartans were never before beaten by a smaller company than their own; nor, indeed, in a set battle, when their number was equal. Hence their courage was thought irresistible, and their high repute before the battle made a conquest already of enemies, who thought themselves no match for the men of Sparta even on equal terms. But this battle first taught the other Greeks, that not only Eurotas, or the country between Babyce and Cnacion, breeds men of courage and resolution; but that where the youth are ashamed of baseness, and ready to venture in a good cause, where they fly disgrace more than danger, there, wherever it be, are found the bravest and most formidable opponents.”

Then there was the second battle, the strategically crucial Battle of Leuctra. It was fought four years later, in 371 BC, and again Spartan troops were outnumbering the Thebans. 300 members of the Sacred band of Thebe were again positioned straight against the Spartan elite force of 700, led by no one else but the Spartan king himself, Agesilaus the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Not only did the Thebans defeat the Spartan army (killing 400 of them), but they even managed to kill the Spartan king in battle, putting an end to the military dominance of Sparta.

This is how an army of homosexuals fought.

The Sacred Band of Thebes was an undefeated force in Greek history until the appearance of the ingenious military invention of the Macedonian phalanx. In 338BC The Sacred Band of Thebes had a tough war against the Macedonian army, led none less but Philip II of Macedon, together with his son Alexander the Great. This was the battle of Chaeronea (338 BC), in which the Thebans lost and were totally annihilated in a direct fight against the Macedonian phalanx. According to legend,

Joseph Jordania (2014). In: *Tigers, Lions and Humans: History of Rivalry, Conflict, Reverence and Love*. Logos Publishing. ISBN 978-9941-437-60-1.

Philip II, profoundly impressed by the courage of Thebans, built a monument, a huge statue of a lion, dedicated to the Sacred Band of Thebes (ironically enough, lions are also known for their homosexuality). The statue still stands at the original site of the battle, near the village of Chaeronea.

I am quite sure that many readers of this book know about the heroic deeds of the Spartans, their most recent (and somewhat embellished) portrayal being in the 2007 film "300" about King Leonidas and his 300-strong army of Spartans fighting off the Persian armies at Thermopylae, showing their inhuman fighting skills, legendary courage and dedication towards each other. On the other hand, I am not sure how many readers knew about the existence of the Sacred Band of Thebes before reading about them in this book. So, here is some food for thought: we have on one side the 300 Spartans, legendary fighters of Ancient Greece, portrayed in several blockbuster films, and on the other hand we have 300 fighters from the Sacred Band of Thebes, similarly legendary warriors, who on two crucial occasions, in direct fights, defeated a more numerous Spartan army, but for some reason we do not have a single film on the 300 Thebans. I wonder if this neglect of the finest warriors of the ancient world is directly due to the widely-known fact of the homosexual love between those warriors in the Sacred Band of Thebes.

Possibly the most ironic part of this situation is that, according to some sources, Spartan warriors were also boosting their morale by homosexual love between warriors (Hanson, 1994: 124), albeit their homosexuality was not as much advertised in Ancient Greek history as the homosexuality of the Theban warriors. Ancient Greek historians and philosophers were divided on the issue of using homosexual love as the force of raising fighting morale – for example, Xenophon took a very negative view on this approach. The fact that in Ancient Greece military homosexuality was widely practiced (and even applied for practical reasons) is gradually coming out to the general public. I hope that I will be able to see a film on the legendary 300 Theban warriors and their fantastic wins over the famed Spartans in my lifetime. If this was to happen, the Thebans will win another important battle almost 2400 years after their demise – this time being the battle for liberating human sexuality.

Now let us look at the force that destroyed the Theban warriors – Alexander the Great and his father King Phillip the 2<sup>nd</sup>. I remember reading a review on a recent film about Alexander the Great that criticised the film for portraying Alexander as bisexual. Well, Alexander was not only engaged in bisexual love affairs but arguably the greatest love of his life, Hephaestios, was a young man and not one of his women. Furthermore Alexander's father, the King of Macedon Philip II, learned his military skills with Theban warriors, most probably as a young homosexual "eromenos" to an older and more experienced "erastes" warrior. The homosexuality (or more precisely, bisexuality) of Philip II of Macedon is quite well documented. With these interesting historical facts of both the defeat and annihilation of the legendary Thebans by Phillip II, and that of his fascination in the courage of Theban warriors, gives the topic interesting new overtones.

We can also recall here that Ancient Greek mythic heroes were also known to engage in homosexual activity. Possibly the greatest of them, Achilles, was also a homosexual (or more correctly a bisexual) and at least several ancient Greek writers mention this, including Plato. It was Achilles' famous rage over his slain lover Patroclus that changed the fate of the Trojan War and led to Achilles' own death. We know from history (and certainly from world literature) that some wars started due to the love between a man and a woman, sometimes members of different royal families. With the history of the Trojan War we have a fine example of homosexual love starting a war and changing the course of history.

I hope that after reading this short list of facts on the bravest fighters of ancient Greek history (both real and mythic), some skeptical readers will re-arrange their negative attitude towards homosexuality in the military. I do not think the western world will ever get to the point of accepting the Theban model of an elite military force consisting of only homosexual pairs, but the fact that homosexuals and bisexuals can be excellent warriors seems to be proven by human history beyond any reasonable doubt.

Therefore we have good reasons to believe that homosexuality and sexual activity in general could have had an important function for bonding individuals both in animal species and in human groups. Sexuality-based bonding between individuals of same and different sexes was helping to foster the survival of the most socially dedicated animal groups, including our ancestors. This must be the reason why homosexuality and bisexuality were and still are so prevalent in social animals and in human societies. This is also why some of the most celebrated fighters of human history have been spurred on by homosexual love. It would be also logical to propose that homosexuality (and bisexuality) must have been much more prevalent and more acknowledged in earlier, pre-Judeo-Christian religion human societies as there were no strict moral and religious guidelines, obstructions and condemnations to this absolutely normal condition and behaviour of living organisms. If we recall that social interactions through physical touch were present among prokaryotes, a time when there was no sexual division of living organisms, we will come to the interesting conclusion that the first instance of sexual behaviour came from the social interactions of asexual organisms.

In the light of homosexuality (or more correctly, bisexuality) being so prevalent and so important in fostering bonding within social animal groups, it is more probable that it was sociality that triggered the appearance of sexual behaviour, first as a means of bonding among the prokaryotes, and later leading to the formation gender differences and the sexual means of reproduction among the evolving eukaryotes. According to this suggestion the initial body-touch- based bonding sexual games must have been naturally limited to homosexual activities. As gender segregation and development of sexual means of reproduction came much later, the initial sexual-bonding games were conducted between the same sex (or more correctly - genderless individuals). According to this suggestion both homosexuality and bisexuality has been an important part of natural selection in many animal species, particularly in that of social animals. Here I must note that the idea that

sexuality and sexual reproduction were initially formulated as a means of social bonding was first proposed by Nino Tsitsishvili, an ethnomusicologist and evolutionary musicologist, during an informal conversation on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 as a probable origin of the sexual division of live organisms.

Taking into account the uniquely social human nature, it is not accidental that homosexuality is so prevalent in human societies. Only later, with the development of much larger social groups, the creation of such unnatural entities as states and major state religions, human pan-sexuality became the central element of the religious "sin." It is possible that this targeting of sexuality as a "sin" or "taboo" was a tool, instinctively designed by states and major religions to divide the members of smaller, blood-related human bands from each other and to unite them in their imagined societies of ethnic states and Empires. What we know for a fact is that most major religions ban virtually all sexual activities that do not lead to conception. Homosexuality, bisexuality, sexual activity among teenagers, transgenerational sex, fetishism, promiscuity, group marriage and masturbation were all declared anti-ethical and unnatural. Various punishments were designed, many based on the public execution of all parties involved. It was not accidental that in the atmosphere of considering sex an original sin, the complete absence of sexual activity, or keeping celibate, became a sign of particular moral virtue and wisdom. Some founders of major religions were portrayed as living their life completely without sex, or without sin. Some religious heads are supposed to live their lives without sex, and at least one founder of a major world religion is believed by its followers to have been even conceived without any sexual means of reproduction.

If we take into account that sexual activity is widely used in the natural world for the establishment of bonds in social species, we will understand that many of these bans imposed on human societies by major religions must have led to severe and lasting psychological trauma within certain humans. We need to keep in mind that humans are by their nature more sexual than most social animals, even the ones who practice homo- and bisexuality. The extent of sexual activity in humans is apparent when we take into account that human children are universally engaged in sexual games and have sexual desires from an early age. Unlike the young of many other animals, who do not exhibit sexual interests and desires until adulthood, humans have sexual arousals virtually from the time of birth, and children have been known to be engaged in sexual games, masturbation, and even sexual intercourse. In some societies (for example among Bushmen) sex between children was considered very natural. Of course, when European missionaries came in contact with Bushmen and learned their traditional behavioural rules, the sexual freedom was a clear sign to the missionaries of their moral decay and barbaric state of society.

Many religions consider humans "naturally sinful." It is quite fascinating how we declare things that happen in nature unnatural and then consider the human-created rules being the highest authority. Well, the trouble is that even if we try to follow our own rules, we will still face serious problems as major human religions cannot agree exactly what activities should be classified as sinful and what should be counted as permissible. For example, is drinking alcohol, eating meat or marrying

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more than one woman a sin? Well, we know that existing religious and cultural contradiction is one of the forces that divide our world today, leading to aggression and resentment of the cultures of "others." On the other hand, the rules of the natural world are quite straightforward: sexuality is a great bonding force and is widely applied in nature in non-reproductive sexual activities. There are possibly no social animals that do not use sex for social purposes.

We are profoundly social animals, we cannot stand silence, we love singing together, dancing together, we even prefer watching comedies while hearing other people laugh, we talk to ourselves and have TV on all the time just to avoid any gap of silence, yet we are banned from the most natural things of our evolutionary heritage by our cultural and religious values. As a result of these unnatural bans, we suffer from the discrepancies between our natural desires and cultural norms, and as a result we try to fulfill our desires in our fantasies, in dreams, and through different forms of arts.

Imagine forcing bonobos to follow the human moral rules of sexual interactions and banning them from the bisexual and trans-generational promiscuity they actively follow today. This will be the shortest way to turn these happy and peaceful primates, possibly our closest living relatives, into deeply unhappy and aggressive animals. This is most likely what has been done to humanity. It is no wonder that Freud could explain virtually every human fantasy and allusion by means of our banned and thus unfulfilled sexual desires.

In a recent study of suicidal attempts in Israel, an alarmingly large percentage of religious homosexual youths attempted suicide, about 20 times more ratio than the general population (Study: Highest Suicide Rates Among Religious Homosexuals, 2012, 5 September). It must surely be the inevitable conflict between religious faith, with its condemning homosexuality as a sin, and natural homosexual desires that provides such a lethal psycho-physiological recipe for disaster to young religious followers.

It is quite obvious that human societies and cultures are gradually becoming more open, and many more humans will be able to fully open their sexual potential as we progress in time – but there is still long way to go. Remember that the Kinsky report was met with public disbelief, and a film about 300 Thebans is yet to be made. This will take long time, as moral codes instilled in our brains by our societies, traditions and cultures are not easy to change. Using myself as an example, even my strong scholarly understanding of the role of sex in nature and human evolution does not help, and I have to confess that it is difficult for me to imagine myself in anything other than a heterosexual monogamous relationship.

I hope that readers can see the clear link between human homo- and bisexuality and the phenomenon of the Battle Trance. We go in the battle trance easier and disregard our personal safety when we truly love those who we need to fight for.

## **“I love you:” The true meaning of the important words**

Charles Darwin once asked a very serious question to himself in his diary: “What passes in a man’s mind, when he says he loves a person?” (Desmond & Moore, 2004: 278). Unfortunately, Darwin never came back to discuss this non-trivial issue in his books, even in his book dedicated to sexual selection.

Now, from the new perspectives given above, from all forms of sexuality as the means of strong bonding between individuals to the all-consuming fatal passion of the battle trance, we can possibly now answer that difficult question that Darwin asked in his diary. So I suggest that when humans say “I love you” the message is very simple and at the same time very profound. It means the following:

*“Your life is more important to me than my own life. You give my life meaning, and I am ready to die for you.”*

And when we are ready to die for each other, we feel immortal, and that is the only true love. Only when you are in love you have the feeling that there is something in your life that is much bigger and important than you are, and when you have something bigger than your own life your life has meaning and you are not afraid to die.

Not many readers may agree that our words “I love you” have such a profound meaning to many of our fellow humans. They are most probably right – we do not often need to risk our lives in order to save our loved ones; our life became too safe for such heroic deeds to remain commonplace. But for our ancestors, with their everyday physical struggle for survival and with their constant interdependence on each other, the feeling of love and trust had indeed a very deep meaning. Possibly the closest that comes to the feelings of our hominid ancestors towards each other in contemporary life is the internal friendship and love that members of combat units have for each other. As Sebastian Junger remarked, “The willingness to die for another person is a form of love that even religions fail to inspire, and the experience of it changes a person profoundly” (Junger, 2010:239). We can probably argue that religion also has the power to bolster such profound feelings of love and attachment. These parallels are the result of the fact that both religion and war are based on putting humans into a collective state of mind.

For our hominid ancestors, love was not a romantic feel of heartache – it was a way of life, and this profoundly deep love was expressed without any words. According to Albert Mehrabian from UCLA (Mehrabian, 1971), an expert on verbal and non-verbal communication, there are three elements that we take into account when determining how much we like another person and the message they are

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giving us: words account for 7%, tone of voice accounts for 38%, and body language accounts for 55%. Human feelings possibly lost their depth after we started communicating with a higher focus on spoken language? Talleyrand, the mastermind of political games, was possibly correct when he said that we need words to conceal our true feelings...