#### DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 531 CS 217 597

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TITLE Shaping Change in Attitudes: Self-Reflective Writing about

Homosexuality.

PUB DATE 2001-06-31

NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the National Writing Across the

Curriculum Conference (5th, Bloomington, IN, May 31-June 2,

2001).

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

-- Tests/Questionnaires (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; \*Cultural Context; \*Greek Civilization;

Higher Education; \*Homosexuality; Learning Activities;

\*Scholarship; \*Student Attitudes; Units of Study

IDENTIFIERS Controversy; \*Course Development; Personal Writing;

\*Reflective Writing; Self Reflection

#### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the reinvention of an existing course, Ancient Greek Civilization, to introduce undergraduates to current scholarship by inviting them to participate in the controversies which both divide and determine the discipline of classical studies. The paper states that the course is based on the philosophy in Gerald Graff's book, "Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education, " which is that students deserve to see a discipline as a living group of scholars who regularly engage in antagonistic discourse that questions the assumptions, methods, and content derived from them. It explains that five areas of controversy within the classics discipline were chosen: (1) Greek social values; (2) gender studies in ancient culture and literature; (3) ancient "sexuality"; (4) ethnicity as defined by the controversy about Martin Bernal's "Black Athena"; and (5) orality versus literacy in ancient Greek society. The paper discusses why the unit of greatest interest to the professor/author is the one on ancient "sexuality" and how that unit explores homosexuality and the sometimes acerbic dialogue between constructionists and essentialists on the issue of how and to what extent sexuality for 5th-century Athenians is culturally constructed. According to the paper, students need some self-exploration before entering this disciplinary skirmish, and four strategies to achieve this self examination -- three involving personal, reflective writing -- are suggested. The paper then details the rest of the unit material. Contains handouts and assignments, a questionnaire, journal guidelines, evaluation guidelines, and a sample journal entry. (NKA)



by Charles Lloyd

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# Shaping Change in Attitudes: Self-Reflective Writing about Homosexuality

Charles O. Lloyd, Ph.D., Professor Department of Classical Studies Marshall University Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2642 304.696.4642 <u>lloydc@marshall.edu</u> Fifth National WAC Conference Indiana University, 31 May 2001

One of the reasons that I chose the topic for this presentation is that it allows me to talk about my favorite course, Ancient Greek Civilization, which I have entirely reinvented in the last four years. I tried to create a course which prepares senior liberal arts students for graduate work in Classical Studies by introducing them both to current scholarship written not for undergraduates but for trained academics in classics and by inviting them to participate in the controversies which both divide and determine the current discipline of classical studies.

I based the philosophy of the course on Gerald Graff's 1992 book, Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education. Graff's belief is that students deserve to see a discipline as a living, breathing group of scholars who distrust each other's motives and strategies and who regularly engage in antagonistic discourse which questions assumptions, methods, and the content derived from them: "... when truth is disputed, we can seek it only by entering the debate—as Socrates knew when he taught the conflicts two millennia ago" (15). With this idea as a basis, I chose five areas of controversy within the discipline of classics as evidenced by debate in the scholarly literature among its practitioners: 1) Greek social values; 2) gender studies in ancient culture and literature; 3) ancient 'sexuality' (see unit assignments below); 4) ethnicity as



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defined by the controversy about Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*; and 5) orality vs. literacy in ancient Greek society.

The unit of greatest interest to me is the one on ancient 'sexuality' because as a married gay man this aspect of Greek culture is a very important reason that I chose classics as a discipline in which to research and teach, and because, in the light of continuing hate violence against gays and lesbians, I feel an overwhelming need to make sure that students talk about homosexuality and being gay in some kind of serious and committed discourse before they leave the university setting—and on account of this purpose and plan, this course fulfills a university multicultural course requirement. My unit on homosexuality explores the sometimes acerbic dialogue among classicists between constructionists and essentialists on the issue of how and to what extent sexuality for fifth-century Athenians is culturally constructed. Following Michel Foucault and David Halperin, constructionists posit the phenomenon of Greek homosexuality as being completely socially and culturally constructed; whereas essentialists like Boswell and others argue that sexuality has existed diachronically in much the way we presently conceptualize it. When students enter this unit, therefore, they experience 'culture shock' ideologically and emotionally: They cannot escape either the constant assault of the subject itself upon their minds or run away from the positive way in which the Greeks embrace homosexuality in theory and in practice. For this reason, I find that students are not immediately able to enter this disciplinary skirmish without some emotional and intellectual preparation, and this preparation, for both teacher and students, demands a kind of self-exploration of learned social and personal values and a reexamination of perceived expectations of what learning is.

To achieve this self-examination, I use four strategies, three involving personal, reflective writing, by which I invite students to



make a personal commitment to the unit's subject matter. The first strategy involves me personally: I explain my own sexuality as a married, gay man who has, consequently, not only a personal stake in the subject matter but also an expertise equal to that of any marginalized individual teaching her/his own literature or subculture. The first time that I began the unit in this way, I experienced an overwhelming sense of freedom and completion, and it was not until I read Parker Palmer's outstanding book, The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life (San Francisco 1998), that I understood why. In important ways, I had achieved a kind of teaching integrity within which my inner and outer lives meshed into one life, my teaching life. The creation of this integrity had important results for this unit since students understood my engagement with the subject matter and respected my statement of my sexuality as belonging to me as a human being. This understanding facilitated a civil and tolerant kind of behavior even in individuals who had great resistance to the subject matter and perhaps to me as its instigator. By this means, I hoped to set the tone for the unit as one of keen involvement on my part and by the same token tolerance of heartfelt disagreement with the subject matter itself.

I introduce the unit by having the class view James Ivory's Maurice (based closely on E. M. Forster's posthumous novel of the same name) and then write an ungraded personal reflection on the protagonist's love affair with another man. Though this film is set slightly before World War I, I chose it because it shows men embracing and kissing in a perfectly natural and heartfelt way and because it ends happily with the man getting the man. Also, the film follows a secondary male character who fails to understand and commit to the physical feelings of love he has for the protagonist and ends up being left out and trying to comprehend how he missed so badly. The purpose of this reflection on the film is to focus attention to the

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coming of age of a man who may be essentially different in terms of sexuality but whose entry into the adult world embodies an essentially human and, therefore, common discovery of identity. The guidelines for this assignment, Reactions to Merchant and Ivory's Maurice, are featured at the end of this essay. (In this handout, Skinner refers to a previous reading in the course: Marilyn Skinner, "Woman and Language in Archaic Greece" in Feminist Theory and the Classics (Nancy Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin, edd.), 132—her definition derives from Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford 1987), 21-27.)<sup>1</sup>

During the opening session of the unit, I use a survey, by now widely disseminated, entitled "Heterosexual Questionnaire" (see below). I proceed as if the questionnaire is an actual survey and allow students to start to write out answers to the questions. After a short while, someone invariably asks whether I really want everyone to fill it out, and this question begins a discussion in which the class identifies the assumptions the questionnaire's authors make about gay and lesbian stereotypes. Turning these stereotypes around so that they focus on heterosexuals allows students to identify, if only intellectually, with they ways in which straight culture conceptualizes gay subcultures and creates protective hierarchies.

The most important reflective writing also comprises an initiatory assignment: "A Personal History of Homosexuality" in which I ask students to chronicle from earliest recalled experiences to latest their own encounters with gays and lesbians, from the most intimate to the most unengaged (see guidelines for this assignment below). As the instructions reinforce, no one will read this particular writing exercise except those people the writer allows to read it. I have created the assignment in this way so that students will feel free to write fully and



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Interestingly, those students who fail to see the secondary character, Clive, as a character who is dishonest with himself also resist seeing the film as multidimensional in other ways.

privately about whatever changes have occurred in their experiencing of gays and lesbians and in their own tolerance of them. This assignment underlines for them and for me the power and importance of reflection as a means for coming to terms with their own emotions concerning a very emotional issue. Since I teach in the Bible Belt, I always encounter students who reject much of this unit as a learning opportunity. I'm sure that they write about this rejection in this personal history, but they have also had the experience of writing seriously and confidentially about their own sexuality, their own beliefs about it, their concerns about homosexuality, and the ways they have created for understanding gays and lesbians and living with them. This exercise serves as a means for defusing potential hostility and anger because it allows for a free and unfettered expression of their conceptualization of the gay experience. For this reason, I am convinced it serves as a good means to take inventory of personal assumptions and prejudices before investigating the courses real content which concerns the distant culture of ancient Greece.

I have used this assignment in three separate classes, yet only four students have allowed me to read their personal histories, two females and two males. One female student had a fairly long intimate relationship with a man who eventually came out to her and broke off the relationship, and the other was in the process of discovering her own potential for having a same-sex relationship with a female friend. One male student discovered that he had been named after a gay man who was a close friend of his mother and was very non-judgmental, and the other stated that he was very close to being homophobic, thought in stereotypically prejudiced ways about gay people immediately after talking to them one on one, and saw this unit as a possibility for his own growth in this area. In the light of these revelations, I need to add some sort of writing which indirectly assesses how helpful this assignment is as an introduction to the unit.



In general course evaluations, no one has commented on how this assignment works.

The unit's graded assignment and central project continues the use of reflective writing by the creation of a double-entry journal which explores from students' personal perspectives a difficult theoretical text on Greek 'sexuality,' David Halperin's 100 Years of Homosexuality (New York 1990). Students engage in this reflective writing on two levels: 1) the emotional engagement with or rejection of the pro-gay advocacy of portions of Halperin's argument, and 2) the intellectual challenge of understanding a complex and dense theoretical text which argues for a Foucaultian interpretation of 'sexuality' in ancient Greek culture. The double-entry journal allows a serious and complete involvement on the part of the student with the text by means of summary, quotation, paraphrase, and making connections with other readings, discussions, and learning experiences—see the guidelines for this assignment below. At the same time, there is space and the expectation of reacting emotionally both to the text and to this special process of interacting with it. Interested and committed students have produced double-entry journals in which they attempt to stretch themselves both emotionally and intellectually and create a real dialogue with Halperin's text by taking on the persona of Halperin so as to answer their own questions.

At this point I can only believe that these kinds of reflection through writing invite students to experience Greek 'sexuality' less emotionally and more thoughtfully. I did ask the 2000 class in a brief narrative to describe what they learned from the unit, film, and written assignments: out of sixteen students, eight stated that they had learned something significant (from perceiving that they were tolerant to grasping that they had no contact whatsoever with gay people); whereas seven said they had learned nothing new at all (one stated he/she was uncertain). But I have yet to devise any surer



means of evaluation which will reveal to what extent specific practices enable students, especially those who have difficulty accepting views unlike their own, to deal with the subject of (homo)sexuality meaningfully and with less fear.

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# **Handouts**



# Assignments: Unit Three

# Ancient Greek 'Sexuality'

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22 February  Ancient  Greek "Sexuality"	Read C. A. Tripp, <i>The Homosexual Matrix</i> , "A Rapid Cross-Cultural View of  Homosexuality," pp. 63-87 (on closed reserve in Morrow  Library); following guidelines already distributed, prepare personal histories of homosexuality and submit reflections on Merchant and Ivory's "Maurice."	In-class analysis of Merchant and Ivory's film, "Maurice"; discussion of Tripp's understanding of homosexuality across cultures; explanation of reading log process for this unit.
24 February	Read Eva Cantarella, <i>Bisexuality</i> in the Ancient World, chapter 2, "The Classical Age," pp. 17-53 (on closed reserve in Morrow Library); write to your reading log partner about the elements of Cantarella's discussion with which you struggle; send this writing to the instructor as usual.	Analysis of Cantarella's perspective and methodology; comparison of current American homoerotic culture/practice and Ancient Greek (= Athenian) homoerotic culture/practice.
29 February	Read John Winkler, <i>The</i> Constraints of Desire, pp. 17-23 and chapter 2, "Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens," pp. 45-70 (on closed reserve in Morrow Library); answer your reading log partner's writing to you, and write to her/him about your struggle with Winkler's chapter; send both writings to your instructor as usual.	Analysis of an excerpt from Halperin's Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography which explains a modern phenomenon similar in some ways to what Winkler describes as the kivnaido~ (kinaidos).
2 March	Read David Halperin, 100 Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love, chapter 1,	Discovery of points of difficulty in the reading and sharing of expertise about them; sharing of



"One Hundred Years of Homosexuality," pp. 15-40; complete as much as possible of your double-entry journal, make two photocopies of it, and submit a copy to your partner and a copy to the instructor.  Read David Halperin, 100 Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love, chapter 2, "Homosexuality': A Cultural Construct," pp. 41-54; complete as much as possible of your double- entry journal, make two photocopies of it, and submit a copy to your partner and a copy to the instructor.  Read David Halperin, 100 Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love, chapter 3, "Two Views of Greek Love: Harald Patzer and Michel Foucault," pp. 54-74; complete as much as possible of your double- entry journal, make two photocopies of it, and submit a  Discovery of points of difficult in the reading and sharing of expertise about them; sharing of	
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the instructor.	
Read John Boswell, Hidden from	
History: Reclaiming the Gay and	
Lesbian Past, "Revolution,	
Universals, and Sexual	
Categories," pp. 17-36 (on reserve	
in Morrow Library); write to your Analysis of how Boswell's	
14 March reading log partner about the theoretical approach differs fro	m
elements of Boswell's discussion Halperin's.	
with which you struggle; send this	
writing to the instructor as usual.	- 1
Completed double-entry	
journals due Friday, 17 March	
(see assignment guidelines).	



The purpose of this assignment is to encourage critical thinking about Merchant and Ivory's "Maurice." If you prefer to structure your own thoughts about the film in some other way than the one presented here, please feel free to do so. You are required to turn in this assignment, but it will not be graded. Your writing on this assignment may be handwritten and completely informal—it will take you all of 20 minutes to do. Please submit it by beginning of class, [date].

## SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1. When in his life did Maurice know enough about himself to make intelligent decisions about his own person and his future? How did he know? How do you know?
- 2. How is the meaning of the film connected with the creation and dissolution of social hierarchies?
- 3. Why does the film end with Clive?
- 4. What questions or what issues does this film raise in you that you have not considered before?
- 5. Skinner defines "subject position" as "an organized way of seeing the world, constituted through language, that permits the individual to impose a coherent meaning on the circumstances and events of his or her life, simultaneously enjoining practices based on that meaning" (132). What does "subject position" have to do with this film?
- 6. Why do you think that E. M. Forster wrote the novel *Maurice* on which this film is based?



## **Heterosexual Questionnaire**

- 1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
- 2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
- 3. Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
- 4. Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
- 5. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
- 6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
- 7. Why do you as a heterosexual feel compelled to seduce others into your lifestyle?
- 8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?
- 9. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they would face?
- 10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?
- 11. With all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
- 12. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
- 13. Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual like you?
- 14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear (s)he might be inclined to influence you in the direction of her/his leanings?
- 15. How can you become a whole person if you limit yourself to compulsive, exclusive heterosexuality, and fail to develop your natural, healthy homosexual potential?
- 16. There seem to be a very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed which might enable you to change if you really want to. Have you considered trying aversion therapy?



From the Chronicle of Higher Education, 9 August 1996:

A University of Georgia psychologist claims to have the first evidence to support Freud's theory that hatred of homosexuals is rooted in discomfort with one's own homosexual urges.

Henry E. Adams and two graduate students assembled a group of male undergraduates who said they had no homosexual urges whatsoever. They asked the students questions to determine how uncomfortable they were around gays and lesbians and categorized them as "homophobic" or "non-homophobic."

The researchers then left individual students in a room to watch four-minute snippets of heterosexual and homosexual pornography while wearing an apparatus to record their level of physical arousal.

There was no difference in how the two groups reacted to the heterosexual pornography, but the group labeled "homophobic" was more aroused by the homosexual images.

The results surprised Mr. Adams, who says he regarded much Freudian theory as "nonsense, in the scientific sense." "I hate to admit it," he says, "but Freud might have been right on." The findings are reported in the August issue of *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*.



The purpose of this assignment is to encourage reflection about your personal history of homosexuality and the creation of a personal inventory of your attitudes about homosexuality. This step, which may cause some degree of discomfort, is necessary if you want to make a meaningful effort to understand how the Greeks represented their "sexuality." No one but you will read it unless you want to allow someone to read it. If it seems helpful, try following these steps or at least consider these kinds of reflection.

- 1. Try to remember your first encounter with a lesbian or gay person. Record this experience and your reaction to it. Why did you react as you did?
- 2. Record your most recent encounter with a lesbian or gay person. What was your reaction? Why? How does it compare with your first encounter? If there has been a change in your reaction or attitude, how do you account for it?
- 3. What formed your present attitudes about gay people? Have encounters with gay or lesbian people ever created in you an emotional or intellectual struggle? How? Why?
- 4. What problems and opportunities will a formal study of homosexuality as a cultural phenomenon in an alien culture like ancient Greek culture present for you?

Please have this writing finished by class time, [date].



# **Double-Entry Journal Guidelines**

# CL 435 Ancient Greek Civilization Spring 2000

A double-entry journal is a special kind of reading log which encourages careful, thoughtful, and accurate readings of all kinds of texts. It allows you to take two important steps toward understanding a text: 1) to create a summary of the main points the author makes (the class will define what main point means for each reading) and identify the areas of the text hardest to understand; and 2) to react to, to contemplate in writing, and to create a context and connections for these main points. Work to master these procedures and this format as quickly as you can since this is the primary kind of written assignment you will have in this course.

#### **GUIDELINES**

- 1. Begin with either two notebook pages adjacent to one another on the desk in front of you or one notebook page which you have divided into two parts by means of a vertical line down the middle.
- 2. Record the date and time each time you work with the text.
- 3. Skim the entire reading assignment, watch for headings or other means of division, and break the text into smaller units according to the way you understand the material from a very cursory reading.
- 4. Read the first section, and when you have finished, summarize the main points of the section on the left page (or left side of page). If summarization is not the most effective way for you to begin to understand the text, quote the portion of the text which you are having difficulty interpreting for yourself. If you don't know a word in the text or if the author is using the word in a new way which you think is important, quote the sentence and underline the word. The left page or left side of the page ought to contain, therefore, more than one kind of writing, and the kinds of writing it does contain will reflect your attempts to understand what the author is trying to say.
- 5. As you work through the text, designate in the left margin where you move to a new page in the author's text.
- 6. When you have completed the summary and/or quotations, review it and the section you are reading once again. On the right-hand page (or the right side of the page), record comments **about** the section or your summary. These comments may be in the form of questions about what the author is saying or connections you can make with other things you



have read or other examples of the point the author is making or speculations about where the author is going with the thought process. If you do write down questions about parts you don't understand, then, later as your reading continues you may return to those questions and find that, after further reading, you do know the answers. Use this section of the journal to react intellectually (or emotionally) to the reading and to reflect on its meaning. Define any terms or words which the author seems to be using in a special or unusual way. If they seem important, define words that you do not know.

- 7. When you have finished reading/analyzing/reflecting on the text, read your summary and your comments, questions, and/or reflections. Add any new thoughts that you have from this new perspective of reading your own reflections. Analyze the effectiveness of the process for this study period. Each work session needs to have a summary section of this sort.
- 8. Record the date and time each time you complete your work with the text.
- 9. Work in this way with Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of Halperin's 100 Years of Homosexuality. Journals may be typed or carefully and written. The completed double-entry journal must be submitted [date]. Late journals will not be accepted.

# Guidelines for Evaluation

These are the points that will be used to evaluate your double-entry journals:

- How complete/thorough is the journal? Has the writer read all assigned selections and written in the journal about all of the main points of the articles? (20%)
- Has the writer delved into these readings as far as she/he can? Are the thoughts/reactions/questions contained in the journal reflective of college-level, junior academic work? Has the writer made a good faith effort to complete this assignment? (30%)
- Has the writer tried to use all of the techniques suggested in the guidelines? [L=left side of page; R=right side of page]
  - summary of parts of article (L)
  - definitions of unknown words or words used in new ways (L)
  - quotations from the text to which you react in some way (L)
  - other examples of what the author means (R)
  - speculations about where the author is going with the argument (R)



- comments/reactions/reflections, both intellectual and emotional (R)
- questions (R)
- connecting with class work, other readings, passages in same readings (R)
- analysis of the process (R) (50%)

Note: To make sure that you are using all of these techniques, put a letter in the margin of your journal next to the section in the journal where you have included each technique above-one sample of each is all that you must show in this way. Using these letters in the margin helps the evaluator locate these techniques in your journal easily. (50%)



# Sample Double-Entry Journal CL 435 Spring 2000

# **Ancient Greek Civilization**

Here is a sample of a double-entry journal I might have written for a paragraph in David Halperin's *100 Years of Homosexuality* (New York 1990), pp. 28-29.

Quotations, Notes, Text, Summary	My Comments/Reactions/Thoughts
" sexual categories and identities are objectivated fictions"	I'm not sure exactly what this term "objectivated fictions" means. Fictions means something that is made up, not real, artificial, manufactured, created but perhaps false since it is not natural. Objectified means making into an object something that is not normally that object, that is, giving reality to something that may not be real. This phrase (objectified fiction) may mean the same thing as reification, that is, the habit human beings have of supposing that the societal conventions and habits they have are natural, that they are born with them when, in fact, these habits of thinking are the result of their own process of socialization. That sexual categories and identities are made up and not natural is hard to understand since these identities feel so normal to us.
the issue is "how to recover the terms in which the experiences of individuals belonging to past societies were actually constituted and,, how to measure and	This seems to be a statement of the question H. is trying to answer in this chapter, perhaps, in his whole book. The point is to try to find out the terms the ancient Greeks used in constituting their understanding of relationships between the sexes and to understand their behaviors through/by means of



22.50	
assess the differences between those terms and the ones we currently employ."	these terms. This inquiry cannot be done without our constant comparison of our own terms and behaviors with their terms and behaviors.
it's only been in the last 100 years that people who have sought sexual contact with members of the same sex have been called homosexuals.	This statement brings the question back to the title of the book and to the introductory part of this chapter. If we can see the enormous shift in the continental shelf of societal ideas in a mere 100 years, is not the work of recreating how ancient Athenians understood their sexual behaviors take on added significance? Won't this inquiry mean for us a much deeper understanding of who we are since in the process we have to uncover our own societal assumptions about ourselves to understand what the Greeks were about?
H. suggests that a physical concept like gravity doesn't just describe reality but in part constitutes reality.	This refers to a previous section where H. in refuting Boswell talks about people experiencing gravity without having a name for it. There is, he points out, a difference between physical concepts which work outside human society and societal concepts which are understood and interpreted only within a given society. He might also have pointed out that gravity provably goes across cultures and exists whether societies accept it or not from a provable scientific basis. What exactly does this say about homosexuality? Is it a concept as sure as gravity and as cross cultural?





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EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)

