

Are same sex sexual relationships morally permissible?

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Homosexuality has been for much of recorded human history a controversial topic, and has become even more so with the advent of religion. Most, if not all religious systems vehemently oppose homosexuality, so far as to condemn homosexuals to everlasting torture in the “ fires of hell.” However, judging the immorality of a deed simply by referring to divine sources is fallacious; it runs contrary to established modern intellectual systems of determining what actions are right and what actions are wrong. In the twentieth century world, reason and well thought out and expressed arguments alone dictate the moral standing of deeds, and any other decision for that matter. The most appropriate method of arguing for or against an ethical issue in the context of its applicability to society is to test it against well-established moral/ethical theories and see how it stacks up. Thus, in this paper I shall argue that homosexuality doesn’t contradict the major ethical theories, namely Utilitarianism, Kantian ethics (deontological perspective) followed by a rebuttal of some common arguments against homosexuality.

Utilitarianism is a fundamentally consequentialist position, claiming that actions should be judged by their consequences, specifically the level of general happiness they bring about. Hence, in accordance with utilitarianism, one should evaluate the level of general happiness an action brings about versus the amount of pain/suffering it causes. All actions that increase the level of general happiness are morally permissible, and actions that bring about suffering are morally not permissible. To discuss homosexuality on utilitarian grounds, we must therefore first and foremost decide on its consequentialist standing i. e. where it stands on the utilitarian meter of increasing happiness and decreasing pain vs. increasing pain and decreasing

pleasure. People who feel that that is what pleases them practice homosexuality. They do so out of personal choice and after much self-deliberation. In fact, since heterosexuality is the norm, “converting” to homosexuality would be akin to being a masochist, i. e. choosing to indulge in that which causes us displeasure in addition to having to face heavy opposition from relatives and society, and those types of ‘homosexuals’ are beyond the scope of my paper. Hence, if you choose to accept that no individual who prefers a heterosexual lifestyle would adopt a homosexual one, then you agree that those who chose a homosexual lifestyle do so because it is what pleases them. Thus, homosexuality brings about pleasure to homosexuals, and so long as these homosexuals do not attempt to impose their homosexuality on heterosexuals (by harassing or raping them), then the heterosexual population has no right to claim that homosexuality causes them displeasure. For them to claim so, the only means by which homosexuality would have caused them displeasure is by “disgusting” them i. e. it is distasteful to their senses (since obviously it is not displeasing them directly, it can only do so then indirectly by being distasteful). Such an argument would be fallacious and of the form:

P1) All disgusting actions are immoral.

P2) Homosexuality is disgusting.

C) Homosexuality is immoral.

While this argument is valid, it is unsound since the first premise is false. Not all disgusting actions are immoral. For example, collecting the trash is

disgusting, does that make it immoral? Homosexuality does not cause any pain or displeasure. Stigmatizing homosexuality on the grounds that it is disgusting is faulty as we argued above. (Common arguments such as homosexual rapists harm children and other victims, homosexuality brings about STD's and so on are irrelevant since they apply to heterosexual acts in the same way they apply to homosexual actions.) Thus, homosexuality does not, and for that matter cannot, harm homosexuals. All it can do is bring pleasure to the people who willfully practice it (because it is what brings them pleasure). On utilitarian grounds, homosexuality increases pleasure (although for a specific part of the population) and does not cause any displeasure or pain. It satisfies the criteria for a moral act as outlined by the Utilitarian ethical system.

Kantian ethics is a moral philosophy that is not a consequentialist one. It judges acts not by what their consequences are, but by how they hold under certain imperatives, and maintain the rational and free nature of humans. The principle of universalizability commits us to acting only on those maxims that do not lead to a self-contradictory maxim, and also, when universalized do not undermine the point of the action (class slides.) To test homosexuality against the categorical imperative we begin by formulating our maxim. Note that a common misconception is to formulate the maxim " Practice homosexuality" or some form of that. This is incorrect as this paper does not seek to argue that all people should be homosexuals, but rather that people that are homosexual are justified in acting homosexually. Let us suppose our maxim is " Practice whichever sexual acts that bring you pleasure." Upon

consideration, we see that this maxim brings about pleasure to whoever abides by it. Next we generalize this principle to a universal law and see its consequences. Assume a world where people practice whichever sexual acts please them, of course, without imposing their sexual desires on others. Such a world would be very similar to the world in which we live in, which is remarkably pleasant to live in as opposed to one that is a very morally tight society. Moreover, we note that such a maxim, when generalized does not lead to a contradictory world. Furthermore, as we shall see next, homosexuality holds under scrutiny by the principle of humanity. The principle of humanity defines a rightful or moral deed as one that does not use any other person as a mere means, but as an end in themselves. As discussed above, homosexual people choose homosexual acts because it brings them pleasure. Thus, when homosexual people indulge in homosexual activities as consenting adults, they both choose to do so. Since they both chose to indulge in this, and so long as they're both content with this, then neither is using the other as a mere means, but as an end in themselves. To argue otherwise would be similar to arguing against other heterosexual acts. Other cases where the people do not consent to indulging in the sex are similar to cases of heterosexual people who do not consent to the sex they are having.

Finally, we shall consider some common arguments against homosexuality and offer possible response to them in the context of the Utilitarian and Kantian moral theories. To begin with we shall consider the unnaturalness argument and its derivatives. A commonplace argument against homosexuality is that it is a misuse of the body's organs. Such an argument

violates the categorical imperative. To show this, let us attempt to generalize it into a universal law. We begin by formulating a maxim “ That action which violates the principal use of an organ is immoral.” After generalizing this into a universal law, we run into a contradiction, as this yields a world we cannot live in. Consider for example applying this rule to any other body organ. The mouth is primarily for eating, and thus any other action apart from eating is immoral, and hence kissing, speaking, breathing from your mouth and so on would all become immoral. Thus the argument that homosexuality is immoral because it violates the principal use of an organ is not applicable since it violates the categorical imperative. Furthermore, if the misuse of the reproductive organs is immoral because it doesn't lead to procreation, where does that place religious figures that take vows of celibacy? The nonuse of an organ is just as immoral as the misuse of one, since the immorality is based on its failure to result in reproduction. Moreover, another derivative of the unnaturalness of homosexuality argument is that homosexuality is unnatural in that it is not found in nature, i. e. animals do not practice homosexuality. First and foremost, the premise on which this argument rests is invalid, as studies have shown that there are certain animals that practice homosexuality. Moreover, basing our moral standards on the practices of animals is an incredibly fragile argument as one can easily observe that many of human practices are not practiced by animals, such as brushing our teeth, showering and so on. In addition, many proponents of homosexuality argue that labeling homosexuality as not immoral would lead to the extinction of the human race. This argument is a gross exaggeration. An argument of the form

P1) Homosexuals cannot reproduce.

P2) If homosexuality were deemed not immoral then many people would become homosexual.

C) The human race will eventually become extinct.

Such an argument is invalid, and unsound as the second premise is faulty. If homosexuality were not to be frowned upon it does not follow that many people would become homosexuals. No heterosexual person would willfully choose to become a homosexual simply because it is not immoral to do so. This is because one chooses to indulge in homosexuality because it is a sexual preference. Moreover, while not a fundamental argument against the extinction of the human race argument, it would be thoughtful to consider whether a decrease in the rate of human reproduction would not actually be beneficial to the human society given the problems of overpopulation that we suffer from now.

In conclusion, homosexuality cannot be deemed immoral as it holds under scrutiny by the major ethical systems: Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. It increases the happiness of the homosexual community without causing any pain or displeasure to the heterosexual community. This of course is contingent upon the homosexual people not imposing their sexuality on others i. e. rape or harassment. It should be duly noted that even if some homosexuals raped or harassed other individuals, be him/her a homosexual or a heterosexual, this cannot be an argument against homosexuality per se as heterosexuals also rape and harass other heterosexuals. Moreover, it

satisfies the categorical imperative in addition to the principle of humanity by not using anyone as a mere means. Homosexuals should not be discriminated against, as their sexual preference is their own personal choice, and solely their business. Given our rights to freedom of choice that we so proudly advocate and vehemently defend, we should extend this right to include the freedom of sexual preference.