Michael Levin – *Why Homosexuality is Abnormal*

- Levin’s central thesis is not that (male) homosexuality\(^1\) is immoral; but rather, that it is *abnormal*. It is a misuse of body parts. As such is likely to lead to unhappiness. The general structure of his argument goes as follows:

  \[\text{P1} \text{ The natural function of the penis is to insert semen into the vagina – the penis is for inserting semen into the vagina; it is not for inserting semen into another man’s anus.}\]

  \[\text{P2} \text{ Evolution selects for creatures who, by and large, and for the most part, enjoy using their body parts according to their natural function.}\]

  

  \[\text{C1} \text{ Human males will, by and large, and for the most part, enjoy heterosexual intercourse more than homosexual intercourse.}\]

- In support of P1:

  - Levin says that a bodily part \(P\) has the function \(F\) if and only if \(P\)’s performing function \(F\) helps the organism (or organisms suitably related to it), and it’s helping the organism in this way explains the evolutionary development of the body part.

    \[\,*\text{ So moving blood throughout your body is the function of your heart. Your heart’s moving blood throughout your body helps you live, and that it helps you live in this way explains why your heart moves blood throughout your body.}\]

    \[\,*\text{ Given this definition of function, it follows that the function of the penis is to insert semen into the vagina, since the penis’s inserting semen into the vagina helps the organism’s progeny come into existence, and its doing this explains why the penis was selected for in the first place.}\]

- In support of P2:

  - Creatures who did not enjoy using their body parts in accordance with their natural function would be less likely to use them, and so less likely to survive and pass on their genes in the evolutionary environment.

\(^1\)‘Homosexuality’ means *male* homosexuality throughout.
• Note that Levin is not committed to the claim that all homosexuals will be unhappy. Rather, just that most homosexuals will, for the most part, be less happy than heterosexuals.

• Levin analogizes homosexuality to laziness. There will be happy people who don’t exercise; however, in general, those who exercise are using their muscles according to their natural function, and will be, by and large, happier as a result.

• Levin cites further evidence of his view: the evidence is the fact that homosexuals are, by and large, and for the most part, less happy than heterosexuals. He thinks that his hypothesis explains this data very well.

• An objection: but homosexuals don’t have any choice about what they are sexually attracted to.

  – Levin: granted; and we shouldn’t blame homosexuals for being sexually attracted to members of the same sex. However, this doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t see homosexuality as a misfortune and take steps to reduce its prevalence, if we can. Sickle-cell anemia is involuntary, and those with sickle-cell anemia are blameless, but we should still take steps to reduce its prevalence, if we can.

• Objection: doesn’t Levin’s hypothesis predict that any sexual activity which is not conducive to procreation (like, for example, fellatio or cunnalingus) will not be conducive to happiness? And isn’t this manifestly false?

  – Levin: certain sexual activities have a preparatory role to play in sex; we should expect that these activities will promote happiness, insofar as they contribute to the penis’s performing its natural function. However, there is a difference between cunnalingus as a prelude to sex, and cunnalingus as an end in-and-of-itself. We should expect that those who are preoccupied with cunnalingus, not as a prelude to sex, but rather as an end in-and-of-itself, will be less happy.

• Supposing that homosexuality is abnormal and, in virtue of its abnormality, likely to lead to unhappiness, Levin says that it would be immoral to adopt policies which legitimate homosexuality, if such policies increased the likelihood that a child will be homosexual.