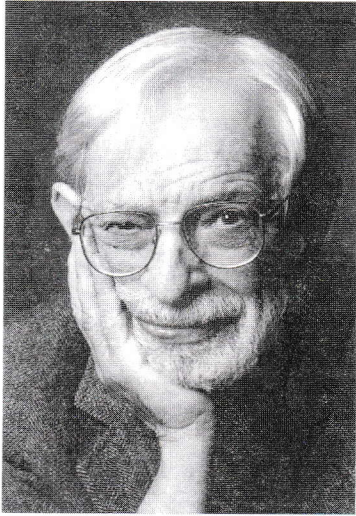


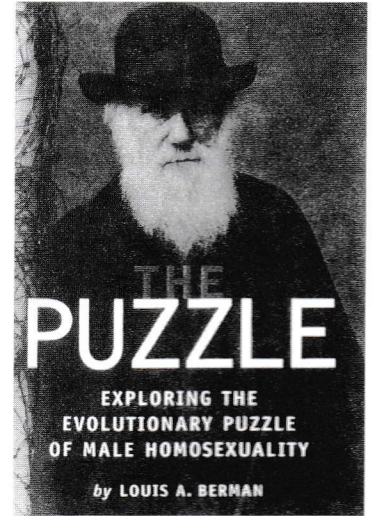
Interview with Louis A. Berman,

author of

The Puzzle; Exploring the Evolutionary Puzzle of Male Homosexuality



(Godot Press, 2003, 583 pp.
\$19.95 paperback, \$27.50 hardbound)



Q. Why is your book entitled *The Puzzle*?

A. Darwin's theory of evolution fails to account for the fact that in every generation, about 3% of the male population is homosexual. Homosexuality survives from generation to generation even though it does not lead to reproduction. According to Darwin, reproduction is what promotes the survival of the species.

Q. Your study is limited to male homosexuality. Why? Why not develop a theory about homosexuality in general?

A. Because there are many indications that male homosexuality and lesbianism follow different rules. Gay men and lesbians may make a good grouping for journalistic, social or political purposes, but for scientific study, as I argue in Chapter 4 of my book, these two phenomena are better studied separately.

Q. How does your theory of male homosexuality differ from the way most people think about homosexuality?

A. My book advances the theory, supported by a considerable amount of evidence—from the work of laboratory biologists, psychologists and anthropologists—that male homosexuality results from the interaction of nature and nurture. This book is unique, I believe, in carefully spelling out of the corroborating evidence.

We attempt to solve a puzzle within the context of Darwinian theory — why are there homosexuals in all cultures and every generation, although their sexual practice has no reproductive value.

We begin to explain that puzzle with the fact that the human body plan, including the brain, is basically female. During the first six weeks of life, male and female embryos look exactly alike. If an embryo is genetically equipped to become a male, at about six weeks after conception, it begins to produce testosterone. This male hormone bathes the embryo and masculinizes the individual's brain and sex organs.

What we cannot see directly is how highly masculinized the boy's brain is. But we *can* see all kinds of *behavioral* differences between the average boy and the average girl. At one extreme are boys who have a strong tendency to

engage in rough-and-tumble play, in horseplay, in aggressive provocation, in seeking attention, and dominance. At the other extreme, are those boys who would rather play indoors, who like to play house or play school, who like to help Mother around the house. They are also more likely to be artistic or musical. They are so much like their sisters (if they have sisters), they are sometimes called "sissy-boys."

Q. How does this fit with your theory?

A. Our theory holds that these differences in brain masculinization occur because some brains are genetically programmed to be more resistant to the masculinizing influence of testosterone than others.

At adolescence, there is another surge of testosterone, and this time it masculinizes the boy's general physique. But if his brain was low-masculinized during his prenatal nine months of life, he still has a low-masculinized brain. He may *look* very masculine, but that's not how he *thinks* and feels and tends to act.

I call these persons men with low-masculinized brains "LMBs." Many get along very well in life. They are likely to become artists, musicians, or teachers. They become members of other helping professions, like librarians, therapists, nurses, physicians and so on. LMB men get married and raise families, and quite possibly are better husbands and fathers than are highly masculinized males.

But about half the men with a low-masculinized brain syndrome are deeply troubled by the fact that they don't *feel* as masculine as they look, and many of these persons *try* to make up for this feeling of deficit by engaging in homosexual behavior.

Q. You're saying that all male homosexuality *can be traced*

continued

to a low-masculinized brain and a feeling of deficit?

A. No. I'm only proposing that a *significant portion* of male homosexuals follow this pattern. I devote five chapters of my book to over 30 homosexual types, some of which may have nothing to do with a low-masculinized brain or a feeling of deficit of masculinity. Let me add that homosexual thoughts, fantasies, and behavior are common experiences for *all* males.

Q. Why has there been so little research on homosexuality?

A. Research in this area is taboo... off limits in most psychology departments. One of the arguments of my book is that we need more research in the development of sexual orientation and in orientation therapy.

Gays, gay advocates, and gay-friendly people sit on the research boards that decide which grant applications are approved and which are not. A young psychologist whose doctoral research was on the origin or change of sexual orientation might later have a hard time finding a job.

It is politically correct nowadays to believe that *sexual orientation is not a problem*, that gay is just as good as straight. But if, on the other hand, homosexuality is really an attempt to overcome a *feeling of deficit*, then straight is better than gay, in the sense that homosexuality burdens the individual with problems and risks that he would not otherwise face.

It's no wonder that homosexuals are more likely to become alcoholics, drug abusers, and are even more likely to become suicidal. The evidence very strongly suggests that straight is better than gay—and that is why my book pleads for more research on the psychological determinants of sexual orientation, and on the improvement of reorientation therapy.

Q. To use the language of evolution, what is the survival advantage of resistance to brain masculinization? Why would such a genetic trait evolve?

A. Our theory holds that resistance to brain masculinization serves to reduce the psychological differences between male and female, to tone down the gender differences that prevailed in prehistoric times, to make the average male less macho and more of a gentleman in his way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. A great many males are "born gentlemen." They don't have to *learn* to be a gentleman. They *enjoy* being a gentleman.

Q. What purpose could this serve? How could "the struggle for survival" favor reducing the masculinity of the average male?

A. In the oldest fossils, males are almost twice as big as females. Gradually, this size difference (what paleontologists call sexual dimorphism) shrinks. Over the millenia, females become bigger and males trim down.

A general rule of nature is that form and function go together, so our best guess is that the earliest hominids were fierce and menacing. If you visit the zoo, you will see that among gorillas, males are twice as big as females, just like our own hominid ancestors. Males are the fierce and menacing protectors of their territory and their harem of females.

Harems require dominance and submission, while tribes reward teamwork and cooperation. Low masculinization transformed males from bullies to team players, and from harem chiefs to *partners in parenthood*. In human society, teamwork among adult groups, and cooperation between human parents is enormously important. Low masculinization is what makes possible teamwork among males, and cooperation between male and female mates.

Q. What makes it more important for human fathers to be cooperative?

A. What makes it so important for the human father to be protective and nurturant, rather than dominant and pugnacious, is that the human infant is so utterly helpless at birth, totally unable to fend for itself, totally in need of maternal care. This condition encumbers the mother and makes her dependent on a mate who will provide her with food, and protect her from harm.

Q. What does all of this have to do with male homosexuality?

A. When the average brain masculinization is lowered, at one extreme end of the curve are males with very low brain masculinization—LBM. *Think of their condition as an overcorrection* of the process that made human nature what it is, that made the human brain the wondrous organ that it is, and that made it possible for the human species to produce poets and philosophers, scientists and engineers, saints and scholars, dreamers as well as men of action.

Q. So your theory is that homosexual men are paying the price for gentling the human male, for making it possible for some humans to reach such high levels of intelligence, for making man a team player, and molding him into a protective and nurturant mate and father.

A. Yes, they *do* pay the price, but whether they *must* pay the price is another question. Low brain masculinization (LBM) does not always lead to homosexuality. It is quite likely that about half of all LBM males lead social lives no different from most men. There is also good evidence that some young men who are distressed or unhappy about their homosexuality can, with help, enjoy a life that is healthier and less hazardous, a life that includes marriage, parenthood, and uncomplicated relations with their colleagues, neighbors, kith and kin. That is the book's practical message. ■