

The Deconstruction Of Marriage and Family

By Christl Ruth Vonholdt, M.D.

Editor's Note: Dr. Vonholdt is the director of the German Institute for Youth and Society, GIYS. The GIYS is the study and research center of the Christian community OJC (Offensive Junger Christen/Reichenberg Fellowship) located in Reichel-sheim/Odw., Germany. The GIYS is involved in research, publication and counseling on the topics of human sexuality, male and female identity formation, sexuality and culture, and marriage and the family.

It should go without saying that an open society must be tolerant towards different lifestyles among adults. However, the issue has long ceased to be that of tolerance, but of the dissolution of marriage bonds and family ties. Today's boost in social status for homosexuality must be seen in connection with the social and sociopolitical tendencies towards the deconstruction and complete redefinition of marriage and family and the dismantling and redesign of genders and generations.

The Deconstruction Of Genders

In recent years there was an increasing shift away from man and woman as basic anthropological realities, towards heterosexual and homosexual identities which supposedly exist on an equal level. However, this, too, has now become outmoded. For quite a while now German universities no longer offer just "Gay -Lesbian Studies", but "Queer Studies". "Queer" theories deny that humankind should fall into two gender categories.¹ Instead of acknowledging mutually complementary manhood and womanhood, such theories hold that there are a variety of different genders which are all on a par with each other: heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgender sexuals, intersexuals and cross-dressers, to name but a few.²

The University of Hamburg has been holding public lectures on "Queer Studies" since 1999. The declared aim of the lecture series is to "counter hetero-normativity ... with something different". The latest publication of the series gave the following definition of the word "queer": "As a term in the political battle, *queer* stands against hetero-normativity, against the distinction of merely two genders and against patriarchal structures."³

At the same time, the new genders are to be no rigid "pigeon holes". Rather, it is to be a matter not just of "destabilizing the two-gender structure", but of "removing the lack of ambiguity of gender and of sexuality". One suggestion is to aim for the "diversification of genders" and therefore to abolish completely any references to gender as a category in legal documents (e.g. in ID cards).⁴

When requested to draft an official statement on the German Transsexuality Act, a number of leading sexologists proposed that it should be possible for people to change their registered personal status (e.g. from "male" to "female" in an ID card) if a person feels transsexual, irrespective of whether a sex change operation has taken place. A change in personal status and name should be subject to no more than a medical report and the person's statement that their "perceived gender membership" does not match their "biological gender".⁵

Within the EU the most prominent group of gay lobbyists is the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), who have long demanded complete legal and financial equality between homosexual, bisexual, transsexual and heterosexual lifestyles. Many of their demands have been met already. In the European Charter of Human Rights, for example, they have succeeded in achieving a “ban on discrimination for sexual orientation”. What makes this so controversial is that, in 1994, ILGA was no longer allowed the status of an NGO (a non-governmental organization), on the grounds that three paedosexual groups belonged to it on a par with all the others. It was only upon pressure from the UN that these groups were excluded in 1994.⁶ In Germany, paedophiles continued to be part of the Federal Association of Homosexuals until 1997.⁷

The Deconstruction Of Gender Does Not Stop At Children

Especially during a person’s youth, their sexual orientation is very flexible and pliable. Scientists work on the assumption that sexual orientation is acquired through a complex and by no means irreversible developmental process that involves a variety of factors. A survey among over 34,000 school children in the US came to the conclusion that 25.9% of the 12-year-old respondents were unsure about their sexuality and their sexual orientation.⁸ (In contrast: representative studies have shown that among the adult population 2.8% of men and 1.4% of women describe themselves as homosexual.⁹) The question therefore remains: what kind of lifestyle do we present to young people as a model?

Although there is no evidence whatever, the view is increasingly propagated among the general public as well as in schools and nursery schools that a person’s sexual orientation is settled at an early stage, that it is irreversible and, above all, that all sexual orientations are equally worth striving for.

For example, the government of the German state of Schleswig -Holstein has compiled a list of children’s and young people’s books in which homosexual lifestyles are presented as models for children from the age of 3.¹⁰ These books can be borrowed free of charge by schools and nursery schools. Nursery school books such as “Daddy’s Roommate”¹¹ are becoming more and more widespread, depicting a homosexual lifestyle as being on a par with a heterosexual marriage and indeed as a desirable model.

The official facts-of-life brochure published by the German state of Schleswig -Holstein emphasizes the equal value of homosexual, bisexual, transsexual and heterosexual lifestyles.¹²

The GLEE project¹³, co-financed by the EU, trains teachers at seminars in conveying to children the equal value of male/female relationships and sexual male/male or female/female relationships. The book rejects any “heterosexist” approach as discriminatory. According to the GLEE project, anybody who gives a heterosexual relationship or marriage any superiority over any other type of sexual relationship is a “heterosexist”.

The Ministry for Women, Youth, Family and Health of the German state of North Rhine - Westphalia has developed a sex education project for schools in collaboration with a gay/lesbian group with the aim of portraying a homosexual lifestyle as exemplary and desirable.¹⁴

However, while there is evidence that men and women (throughout their life!) are capable of reducing their homosexual tendencies and that, in many cases, they can experience a change from a homosexual orientation over to a heterosexual orientation if they strive to do so,¹⁵ this

is not mentioned in any of the projects or brochures. The authors are silent on the fact that a “homosexual identity” is not innate,¹⁶ that change is possible and that young people are therefore able to *choose* among a *variety of ways* in which to handle their homosexual feelings.

Instead, a “feeling of being different” and homo-erotic *tendencies* are interpreted entirely as signs of a gay or lesbian *identity*. Scientific evidence suggests, however, that there are *other* patterns of interpretation for such feelings, whereby the future is seen as basically open-ended and an opportunity is allowed for development along heterosexual lines.¹⁷

Neither do these facts-of-life brochures present any discussion of the many recent studies which show so clearly that there is a significantly higher proportion of psychological problems among men and women with homosexual lifestyles than among those with heterosexual lifestyles.¹⁸ Moreover, only inadequate warnings are presented about the significantly higher rate of sexually transmitted diseases among men with homosexual or bisexual behaviour and about the fact that this rate is currently on the increase.¹⁹

One must welcome the desire to convey unconditional acceptance and loving care towards young people who “feel different” and who have homo-erotic tendencies. However, accepting a person is not the same as the approval of homosexual or bisexual behaviour. Also, what is taught is not merely tolerance towards different lifestyles, but the equal value and the levelling of all sexual lifestyles.

Many young people feel a measure of insecurity about their sexual identity and are rather apprehensive about encounters with the opposite sex. Such youngsters are now receiving a new “mental map” from early childhood onwards: what is presented to them as a desirable model is no longer marriage between man and woman and thus a family, but other sexual lifestyles on the same level. This new “mental map” can significantly impair the heterosexual development of a young person and even block it altogether. It can only add to the diffusion of identities in the next generation and in fact make it more difficult for youngsters to find their true identities.

The Dissociation Of Family From Marriage

If one observes developments from a strategic standpoint, what initially took place was a dissociation of “marriage and family” so that, subsequently, “family” and “marriage” could be viewed as totally separate phenomena. This alone made it possible to get to a point where, nowadays, nearly everyone talks of “same-sex marriages”. Although the new law, passed by the German government, is not called a “Marriage Act” but a “Life Partnership Act”, “gay politicians” had been “persistently ... pressurizing for an exact copy of marriage”²⁰ (accordingly to the Hamburg expert on family law, Eva Marie von Münch, and numerous others). A number of leading legal experts in Germany believe that the new act is modelled on marriage in nearly all aspects.²¹ The fact that marriage presupposes a community between a man and a woman is increasingly seen as a “prohibition of marriage” and “discrimination” against those with a homosexual lifestyle. It is disputed that the basic structure of marriage requires two different genders as an anthropological (and not just a sociological) reality. Although the German Constitution still specifies marriage between man and woman - at least formally - as the only model, there are increasing demands that say: “More and more people live as heterosexuals, as homosexuals or as bisexuals, as couples, in groups or on their own. ... The state must give equal legal and financial treatment to all lifestyles among adults.”²²

What can be regarded as the latest climax in the dismantling policy of marriage and family is an attempt by the German Green Party in the state of Schleswig-Holstein. In March 2002 the Greens conducted a virtual party convention in which a proposal was put forward to change Article 6 Para. 1 of the German Constitution. The original wording is: "Marriage and the family are under the special protection of state regulations." According to the Green Party proposal, this is to be replaced by: "Children and the family are under the special protection of state regulations." This would sever the link between marriage and family. As a result, the procreation of new life, too, would be disengaged from the relationship between man and woman and from the creative state of tension between the two. It would effectively call into question the whole concept of motherhood and fatherhood.

Eliminating The Procreation Of New Life From The Creative Tension Between Genders

Reproduction scientists, gay/lesbian groups and others are advocating the establishment of sperm banks and free access to such banks for couples, regardless of whether they are in a homosexual or heterosexual relationship. They are also supporting the donation of human eggs and surrogate motherhood.

The Lesbian and Gay Association in Germany demands in its new "Family Book": "Lesbian and gay couples with children have a right to full recognition as families. Discrimination against lesbian and gay families must come to an end. They must be put on an equal level in legislation on tax, on social benefit and on names. (...) So far women in Germany have no free access to sperm banks outside of marriage. This is discriminatory. The right to set up a family must apply to everyone."²³

In 2001 a brochure was published by the Senate of the German state of Berlin, titled "Rainbow Families - When Parents are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transsexual". In this brochure, the Senate demands equal rights for parents living in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual relationships,²⁴ asserting that "equal adoption rights are the yardstick for measuring the equality of lesbians and gays..."²⁵

As early as 1996 the Berlin Senate made a number of prescriptive recommendations about the rearing of children by couples living in homosexual partnerships.²⁶ To provide evidence for the alleged harmlessness of such an environment for children, the Senate referred to a variety of studies. However, none of these studies provides evidence that a homosexual partnership is harmless for children, and the authors fail to mention negative effects on children living in homosexual households.²⁷ No mention is made of the many studies that provide evidence for the significant disadvantages that are suffered by children who grow up, for instance, without a father.²⁸

In Colorado, USA, a court of law recently ruled that on the birth certificate of a child growing up with two women in a lesbian partnership, the names of both "mothers" may be entered under "parents", without requiring any further names.²⁹

Without being noticed by the general public, a complete reinterpretation of language is currently taking place. Yet if a society calls something marriage that is not and refers to something as a family that cannot be a family, it imposes an added burden on its children and deprives them of their right to an origin - their right to have a mother and father.

Under the pretext of building up families, the family is in fact being destroyed, and so is its integration into the sequence of generations.³⁰

The Deconstruction Of Generations

Dr. Helmut Graupner is a member of ILGA -Europe and a leading representative of the Austrian gay movement. In 2002 he fought a case in the European Court of Human Rights wherein the age of consent for homosexual activities between adults and young people should be reduced to 14 in Austria. Graupner demands in an internationally renowned magazine not only that sex with children above 14 should be regarded as a gay rights issue, but also that sex with children *under* 14 should be exempt from criminal punishment in individual cases.³¹

The current legal policy spokesman of the German Green Party demanded as early as 1988: “The cementing of a sexually repressive climate... can only be prevented by a mobilization of the gay movement for equality between homo - and heterosexuality which, unlike paedosexuality, is totally unproblematic. The achieving of this is a prerequisite for the future battle to ensure at least the partial decriminalisation of paedosexuality.”³²

Today, therefore, we are faced with the fact that not only gender membership, but indeed the difference between generations is being denied, with the resulting destruction of a sheltered environment required by children.

An Alliance For Marriage And Family

Do we still have enough courage and conviction to present to our children and youngsters the concepts of masculinity and femininity, maleness and femaleness as a dual structure of humanity where man and woman are complementary, in need of one another, directed towards each other and in which they form the basis for the future - a dual structure that is visibly expressed in the cultural estate of marriage?

It is so important that there should be peace between the genders and the generations. But how can it be achieved if we sever the link between marriage and family, and if children no longer experience this peace lived out between mother and father in everyday life? The world view of our children will be determined by our success or failure in achieving this peace.

Throughout the history of mankind, in all cultures and religions, the term marriage has only ever been applied to the liaison between a man and a woman who, in principle, are prepared to give birth to children.

If “marriage” today is to be a matter of either a heterosexual or homosexual couple living together and “family” simply a matter of children living together with one or more adults, then we are undermining a significant pillar of the very basis of our society. The levelling of gender differences and of the creative tension between man and woman as well as the denial of the sequence of generations and the differences between them amounts to the termination of a fundamental anthropological consensus and eventually the destruction of our civilization.

We need a new “alliance for marriage and family” - for the sake of the next generation.

Notes:

1 Heidel, U. et al., *Jenseits der Geschlechtergrenzen*, Männerschwarmscript-Verlag, Hamburg 2001.

2 Heidel, U., op.cit., p. 19.

- 3 Heidel, U., op.cit., p. 19.
- 4 Heidel, U., op.cit., pp. 346ff.
- 5 Becker, P. et al., "Stellungnahme zur Anfrage des Bundesministeriums des Innern vom 11. Dezember 2000 zur Revision des Transsexuellengesetzes", in *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung*, issue 3, 2001, pp. 258-268.
- 6 *CultureFacts*, February 7, 2002, published by FRC, Washington D.C. <http://www.frc.org>.
- 7 See Braun, J., *Schlufßwort*, in: JZ 23, 2002, p. 295.
- 8 Remafedi, G. et al., "Demography of Sexual Orientation in Adolescents", in: *Pediatrics*, vol. 89, no. 4, 1992, pp. 714-721.
- 9 Robert T. Michael, John H. Gagnon, Edward O. Lauman and Gina Kolata: *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey*, NY Warner Books, New York 1994. According to a study conducted in Germany in 2001, only 1.3% of men and 0.6% of women describe themselves as homosexual.
- 10 Eurogay-Emnid Study 2001, "Schwules Leben in Deutschland", press releases, p. 17.
- 10 *Gleichgeschlechtliche Lebensweisen, Bücherverzeichnis*, published by Ministerium für Justiz, Frauen, Jugend und Familie [Ministry for Justice, Women, Youth and Family], Schleswig-Holstein, 2001.
- 11 Willhoite, Michael: *Daddy's Roommate*. Alyson Publications 1991 (deutsch: *Papa's Freund*, Berlin 1994)
- 12 *Sexuelle Orientierung. Thema für die Jugendhilfe*, published by Ministerium für Frauen, Jugend, Wohnungs- und Städtebau [Ministry for Women, Youth, Housing and Urban Construction], Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel 2000.
- 13 "GLEE Project", <http://glee.oulu.fi/project.html>.
- 14 See *Amtsblatt des Ministeriums für Schule, Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* [Ministry for Schools, Science and Research of the state of North Rhine - Westphalia], Düsseldorf, 53rd year, no. 11, 2001.
- 15 See Spitzer, R. "New Study on Sexual Reorientation Therapies" in: *Bulletin*, No. 2, Autumn 2001, German Institute for Youth and Society, Postfach 1220, D -64382 Reichelsheim, email: institute@ojc.de.
- 16 For instance: *Da fiel ich aus allen Wolken - Informationen für Eltern homosexueller Kinder*, published by Ministerium für Frauen, Jugend, Wohnungs- und Städtebau [Ministry for Women, Youth, Housing and Urban Construction], Schleswig-Holstein, Kiel 1999.
- 17 See Nicolosi, J: *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality - A New Clinical Approach*, Jason Aronson, Northvale 1991; Nicolosi, J.: *Healing Homosexuality*, Jason Aronson, Northvale, 1993.
- 18 Fergusson, D.M. "Is sexual orientation related to mental health problems and suicidality in young people?", *Arch. Gen. Psychiatry*, vol. 56, Oct. 1999, S. 876-880; Sandfort, T. et al., "Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders: Findings from the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study (NEMESIS)", *Arch. Gen. Psychiatry* 58, 2001, S. 85-91; O'Leary, D., "Why the Homosexual Lifestyle offers No Model for Children", *Bulletin*, No. 3, Spring 2002, German Institute for Youth and Society, Postfach 1220, D -64382 Reichelsheim, email: institute@ojc.de.
- 19 Dannecker, M., "Erosion der HIV-Prävention?" In: *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung*, 15th year., issue 1, 2002, pp. 58-64, and, more recently: "Der harte Schanker kehrt nach Paris zurück", *Frankfurter Rundschau* 17.5.2002: The number of syphilis sufferers has quadrupled within a year. 90% of those affected are homosexually active men.
- 20 "Mit heißer Nadel - Die Hamburger Familienrechtsexpertin Eva Marie von Münch über die Verfassungsklage der Länder Bayern und Sachsen gegen die Homo-Ehe", *Der Spiegel* 28, 2001, p. 40.
- 21 Braun, J., *Ehe und Familie am Scheideweg, Eine Kritik des sogenannten Lebenspartnerschaftsgesetzes*, S. Roderer Verlag, Regensburg 2002.

- 22 Christina Schenk (PDS), member of the German Parliament, during a consultation on the Life Partnership Act on July 7, 2000, quoted by Braun, J., op.cit., p. 21.
- 23 Press release of February 25, 2002, <http://www.lsvd.de>.
- 24 "Regenbogenfamilien - Wenn Eltern lesbisch, schwul, bi- oder transsexuell sind", published by Senatsverwaltung für Arbeit, Soziales und Frauen (Senate Administration for Labour, Social Affairs and Women), Berlin 2001.
- 25 "Regenbogenfamilien ...", op.cit. p. 27.
- 26 www.sensjs.berlin.de/familie/gleichg/Doku16/start.htm.
- 27 For instance: Sarantakos, S.: "Children in three contexts", *Children Australia* vol. 21, no. 3, 1996, pp. 23-31.
- 28 For instance Franz, M. et al.: "Wenn der Vater fehlt. Epidemiologische Befunde zur Bedeutung früher Abwesenheit des Vaters für die psychische Gesundheit im späteren Leben", *Zeitschrift für Psychosomatische Medizin* 45, 1999, pp. 260-278.
- 29 *CultureFacts*, April 18, 2002 published by FRC, Washington D.C. <http://www.frc.org>.
- 30 See Amendt, G., "Die Bedeutung der Familie - wie sie begründen?", www.igg.uni-bremen.de.
- 31 Graupner, H., "Love vs. Abuse: Crossgenerational Sexual Relations of Minors: A Gay Rights Issue?" in: *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1999, pp. 203-215.
- 32 Beck, V., "Das Strafrecht ändern?", in A. Leopardi: *Der pädosexuelle Komplex*, Berlin 1988, p. 268.

© 2002 Dr. Christl Ruth Vonholdt

Deutsches Institut für Jugend und Gesellschaft – German Institute for Youth and Society
64382 Reichelsheim

Germany

www.dijg.de

institute@dijg.de