

The Origin & Nature of Sexuality:

A Research Report Using a Scientific & Religious Role Theory of Unified Reality

by Kevin Franklin

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Reviewed by Jerri Bassi

In the Summary (at the beginning!) Kevin writes "This challenging, confronting and I hope interesting book, is a revised edition of my doctoral thesis". It is definitely all of these things. There are three areas of work described; language and review of research literature, his research and methodology, and The New Paradigm.

This work is not a wisely simplistic antidote to life's struggle or an alternative to science, religion and psychology. He presents his way of unifying these various schools of thought and practice. He remains psychodramatic whilst setting out many facets of human experience. The writing is complex with plenty of asides that assist the reader to ponder awhile. At times, the reader feels Kevin's inner struggle to express meaning but then again, he is a human being, as he would say, living "in a socially phobic world". It is not a paper (for me anyway) to read in one or two sessions. I had to allow plenty of time to come and go with this work.

Existential Identity and Language

Even though the work focuses on sexual identity, in particular the development of homosexual identity, it is not limited to

these areas. From the beginning the reader dives into questions regarding existential identity and our author gives us a glossary of words to whet our appetite. When a woman gives birth to a newborn, "is she a mother?" Is she a role player or role taker? What is our understanding of sexual awakening? Other terms such as existential identity; sexuality as social roles, gender roles, sex roles; theory of the person are explored and clarified. He acknowledges the semantics of everyday language and the confusion of tongues in the use of terms such as *male* and *female* – common words that seem clear enough on the surface.

With this play of language the reader is encouraged to question and reshape their thinking and is given an opportunity to wake up to themselves in a new way.

Other philosophers have grappled with these questions. One such researcher is G.H. Mead who explored the nature of subjective and objective phenomena. Mead attempted to bridge this duality by introducing a 'third-person self'. Kevin argues that Mead's approach "personifies reductionism and social determinism". After rejecting Mead and critiquing other

approaches Kevin creates his own frame of reference to fully understand how we deal with issues concerning identity.

Research

Kevin's three research studies involved over 200 people some of whom were interviewed in both Study 1 and Study 2. Study 3 involves a discriminating analysis of the two previous Studies.

Kevin takes us into a world of research where he hypothesises about (a) the "relationship between gender identity and sexual preference and (b) the identification of that gender as male or female". He demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between sexual preference and gender identity and subsequently the non-relationship between sexual preference and sexual identity.

These are complex formulations. His research tools are clearly laid out, including tests such as questionnaires from the 1970's that measure homosexuality identity formation. Those of us who have little experience of scientific research techniques gain a way of thinking how to develop a means to further explore and then test out the results of our ideas.

Kevin confirms scientifically that homosexually identified people are not defined by their differences but by similarities. He shows that older research seems to say that homosexual folk are different than heterosexuals and therefore suffer from a higher anxiety level. This was said to be (by previous research) because they stray from dominant social mores and are therefore deviant. He develops and presents the methodology and results of three research studies to test questions posed by other theorists who regard homosexuality as deviant.

His results show that "the origin of sexual preference is in gender identity, however this

does not identify its male or female nature. He asks if gender and sexual identity is the cause of sexual preference and his results show that "gay men are not significantly different from straight men..." Having established that gay and straight men are not so different from each other Kevin is now free to establish and present his new paradigm of personality theory.

Reversing roles with the writer I experience his vision; that I as a man am no different in my identity than a heterosexual woman as we are both attracted to men. The fact that I am a male person does not limit my perception, if I am free of the social forces around me. This could then be described as a liberation or spiritual epiphany.

In a brief section entitled *The Man in The Moon is a Woman*, he quotes Moreno's study of a potentially psychotic patient at Beacon. In the report Moreno follows the treatment of Mary who was intent on "finding John" who is either an actual person or an inner object of her imagination. Having set out a scene on the stage Moreno introduced an auxiliary ego to assist in role testing/creating. Moreno gives us five hypotheses of which our author Kevin questions one that posits "John is Mary. ...but how can Mary be a man?".

Kevin is our man to answer this question, proposing that Mary can be a male in a female body. At the same time "she is under the sway of the external paradigm", of the cultural conserve, to identify as female. The psychological question from Kevin's perspective seems to be whether Mary is dissociating in her internal/subjective experience in her imagined relationship with "John" or whether she is in the process of developing a new role within herself? This paper encourages us to understand that she can be John psychodramatically and who is to say that this is not real? Moreover, Kevin alerts us to the elements of reality and time

in the roles we enact. That we, along with Moreno, are influenced by the social mores of our time, if we allow it.

This opens up a role based model of sexual identity where “the straight woman is a male in a female body”. His argument is that the male in the female body is attracted to the male body in others. Like attracts like and that this dynamic underlies sexual preference.

The third area of research involves scientific comparisons to further test what determines gay identity formation. His criterion here is of great interest to the psychodramatist who is concerned with measuring role development in various situations. Kevin uses the criteria of the expression of free will as opposed to a measure of anxiety that prevents a person from enacting their actual sexual preference.

Kevin’s work reflects the mind of a scholarly Morenian clinician and anyone who is interested in the applications of psychodramatic philosophy and techniques will gain from working through this relatively short and complex paper.

Even though Kevin points to his own style as “overwriting” he is encouraging the reader to deeply revisit their inner notions of gender and sexual identity. He assists the reader to make links with Morenian ideas of distinguishing between role playing and role taking and the benefits of role reversing with ones self as well as others.

Describing the Whole Person

There is a search for a new paradigm to describe the whole person. This may not seem entirely new to the seasoned psychodramatist, as it is linked to fundamental Morenian ideas. What I think is new is Kevin’s ability to carry out scientific research based on psychodramatic values and extend an older theory into new arenas.

He presents us with an interesting thesis; that of the Personality Theory of Persons

Grammar as a *Unified Theory of Reality*.

Here he creates a clear picture of “the new paradigm of creative spontaneity” where there is integration of subjective/objective and the psychodramatic/ psychosocial experiences.

This area takes us into questions of religion in the Christian traditions, science and the art of the psychodrama method. Our esteemed philosopher is encouraging us to step out of dualism, he refers here to Descartes and the mind-body distinction, and toward a state of integrated being that Morenian thinking encourages us to consider - a unified reality. Essentially he is demonstrating the need to bring spontaneity to all these areas of living in order for us not to be dominated by the social forces of our time.

In this world of integration I think Kevin is saying that we are then beyond being limited by our culture and free to role reverse with one another. He uses the analogy of the mother and child moving from a biological and moral relationship to an ethical and spiritual relationship

Even though the reader may experience some awkwardness in the writer’s use of words, we are reminded again how much weight is given to what we say and how we speak to one another. This is our author’s point. That a person’s identity is shaped by what those around them say and express to them. In that sense Kevin makes the critical observation that “sexuality is an expression of relationship”. This is a very different perspective to the idea that there is a *thing* within each of us we can call sexuality.

As I read this over some weeks I was moved by how often words like gender, identity, sexual, heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual, gay, lesbian and even new words like metrosexual, are used to attempt to describe and understand one another’s identity.

A very stimulating paper indeed.