

The Sexual Boundary - Danger: Transvestism and
Homosexuality¹

As an opposite to virginity, which is morally pure, we shall first consider transvestism, which is most commonly treated as morally dangerous. On the phenomenological level, virginity and transvestism thus oppose each other, but on another level they share a trait: both are classificatorily ambiguous.

The choice of transvestism as our first example of sexual dangers is, however, not only based upon logical considerations of fitness, it is also owing to the existence of a famous book, which is devoted to this problem, thereby providing us with the material necessary to this exposition. The book referred to is Naven (Bateson, 1936), which in many ways anticipates current trends and topics in social anthropology, notably the treatment of the social organization of emotions.

Transvestism is ambiguous, and it owes its dangerous powers to this fact. When it is consciously acted out as an appropriate cultural response to certain circumstances, it means a conscious act of play within the boundary areas of a distinct social order, the distinctiveness of which is primarily based upon the opposition of the sex-categories. This kind of transvestism, whose meaning-content need not be as conscious as the play itself, is thus directly related to a conceptual classification within the structural order of the particular culture, and we shall refer to it as a conceptual or cultural transvestism, as opposed to the western notion of psycho-pathological transvestism. The latter of course also means a boundary transgression, but it has its main focus in sexual behaviour, not in the sex-categories. Although the two forms are very closely related, we must keep them separate due to their particular emphases.

Conceptual transvestism is not confined to primitives, it is also found within our own culture. As an example, Bateson mentions the male dress of a horse-woman, and I would like to add the overtly male dress of female students at Oxford, for instance. Why is the academic dress for women not a long blue one with puff sleeves, but a black skirt, white shirt and neck-tie. In both cases it is signalled that women, by sitting on a horse or sitting examinations, are transgressing a boundary. They are attaining the cultural attributes of the male category. It is apparently still somewhat out of place (or of category) for women to receive a higher education. This is not a feminist's bravado to a male chauvinist system of education, since the mere possibility for dressing appropriately (that is like a male) shows the flexibility of the system. It is only the categories that are conservative. Admittedly, this is hair-splitting, since the conceptual categories and the social sentiments are of course two sides of the same coin.

1. This is the second and final part of an article, the first part of which appeared in the previous issue of the Journal (Vol. 5 no. 3).

However expressed, the occurrence of transvestism presupposes that the sex-categories are clearly defined, since there can be no disorder without order. For the Iatmul, this order is certainly rigid, since they are one of many New Guinean societies characterized by a harsh sexual antagonism. The ethnographic evidence of Iatmul transvestite behaviour will be briefly outlined on the basis of Bateson (1936). Transvestism is a ceremonial act undertaken by certain relatives in order to honour somebody. The most important social relation in which naven-behaviour (the culturally approved transvestite behaviour) occurs is the one between a man and his mother's brother (wau). The wau will act out a naven-ceremony to honour his sister's son (laua), upon the first successful hunt and especially upon the first successful homicide of the latter. But also minor achievements may instigate naven ceremonies by the wau towards his laua. Apart from the mother's brother, a naven ceremony may be initiated by or at least include: the mother's brother's wife, the father's sister, the elder brother's wife, own wife's brother (= the wau of ego's children), a sister and with some modifications also ego's mother. We note that all of the possible male actors are affinally linked with ego, thereby to some degree associated with the female relatives of ego in the patrilineal environment. Within ego's consanguineous relations only women are undertaking naven-behaviour.

Thus we may initially suspect a pattern which relates the ambiguous sexual performances to the ambiguous social classifications of affinal relatives at large and of female consanguineous relatives within a strictly patrilineal system. What may be more important to the classification of male and female is that there are significant differences in the actual naven-performances of the different relatives. For the sake of convenience, we shall concentrate upon the mother's brother (wau) and the father's sister (iau) as the most important representatives of affinally related men and consanguineously related women, respectively.

At the occasion of a naven ceremony, the wau dresses up like a woman, in a grotesquely exaggerated form. Usually he presents himself as an ugly and filthy widow, further ridiculed by a belly-string as the sign of pregnancy. In this costume the (real or classificatory) wau staggers around the village, searching for his laua who tries to avoid him, because his behaviour is rather embarrassing and humiliating in the eyes of the laua, in spite of its intention to honour him. While searching for his laua, the wau ridicules the women by exaggerating their sexual attitudes in particular, by falling to the ground with the legs wide apart, etc. When, or if, the laua is found, the wau rubs his buttocks up and down the laua's leg, an act of overt sexual content. The whole ceremony is accompanied by the laughter of the audience, while the laua himself expresses shame at the conduct of his uncle.

When the iau (FZ) acts out a naven ceremony, she wears a splendid male attire, which is in sharp contrast to the filthy female attire worn by the men, on the parallel occasion. When the women dress like men, it is by borrowing their feather hair-dresses and other ornaments, which it was normally a killer's

privilege to wear. This difference is very important, since it in the most dramatic way underlines a basic distinction between the sex-categories.

If for a moment we can content ourselves with the equivalence of women with nature and men with culture, we might get some relevant insight into one aspect of the sexual distinction. The roughness of this correlation of opposites should be obvious, it may even prove to be generally false, and at the least it will need further discussion, but for the moment it may nevertheless help us to introduce a new facet to the problem of transvestism. After all, the opposition of nature and culture is always very relative, and for the moment we may legitimize our equations by referring to the men as the generalized sex, capable of external social and political relations, and to the women as the specialized sex, by nature confined with internal (reproductive) functions. (Cf. Hasstrup, 1974).

This warning about the roughness of the concepts given, we may proceed to a useful consideration of the humorous content of the naven ceremonies. Milner (1972) suggests that the most general objects for laughter are excessive nature and excessive culture. In the Iatmul transvestite ceremonies, these opposite humorous manifestations are both present. When the men dress and behave as women they are exposing an excessive nature to laughter, while the women wearing the successful killer's dress are mocking of excessive culture.

Speaking about laughter, it is striking to what extent the Iatmul transvestite behaviour shows a family resemblance to joking behaviour. Not only is part of the joke often of obscene character, but the kinship relations, in which the two types of behaviour occur, are also coincident, apart from the occasional naven acting by the mother and sister. But these exceptions rather illustrate than deny the comparison, as we shall see in a moment.

Bateson explains the wau's naven behaviour as a result of the male ethos (for its content), but originating in the emotional ambivalence of this particular kinship relation: the friendliness associated with the mother, the hostility originating in the in-law component. Thus, not only does naven behaviour more or less belong to the same type of kinship relations as traditional joking behaviour ("traditional" within the anthropological mode of registration of "behaviour", only), but it is also defined by the same ambivalent sentiments.

Where Radcliffe-Brown (1940; 1949) described a joking relationship as originating in a simultaneous presence of social conjunction and disjunction, one might as well turn this argument upside down, as suggested by Ovesen (1972), and say that were it not for the joking behaviour there would be no ambivalence. This last argument may hold good for the naven ceremonies, where one suspects the transvestite behaviour to be the source of resentment itself, within this particular kinship relation. This demonstrates that the more old-fashioned parts of Bateson's book should be taken with a grain of mistrust, as causal explanations anyway, since they are very firmly rooted in the thirties' trends

of functionalism. To sum up, the emotional ambivalence towards the mother's brother may originate in the naven ceremonies, since apart from this anomalous behaviour, the wau is not ambivalent by himself. He is certainly a whole person, with whom one has certain personal relations.

Rather than using any emotional ambivalence as causative of behaviour, we shall follow Levi-Strauss, where he stresses that emotions "are consequences, never causes" (Levi-Strauss, 1969, p. 142). In the present case the emotional ambivalence is a result of a conceptual ambiguity, as may be the case of any joking behaviour. But where "normal" joking especially relates to an ambiguity of kin-definitions, the naven is further related to the ambiguity of sex-categories, and this explains why the mother and sister take part. The order of lineal descent and the disorder of extra-lineal relatives which lie at the root of almost any joking behaviour, is in the Iatmul case more overtly related to the order of sexual distinction than in "weaker" joking, but the problem of lineality is still present.

Even though it is a very distinct phenomenon, the naven ceremony may be labeled as a joking phenomenon, since the only reasonable definition of joking relationships must relate to formal and not to behavioural characteristics, stressing conceptual ambiguity rather than emotional ambivalence. By so doing the naven performances naturally become included, as well as a great variety of other phenomena which are casually labelled as joking, often not so. In this way "behaviour" becomes replaced with a "kind of significant action" as Ardener (1973) suggests for the unit of analysis, and we are, as mentioned, able to define the kind formally by the presence of conceptual ambiguity. The naven act is a very dramatic expression of conceptual ambiguity, since it is more marked by the sexual dilemma than are weaker expressions of joking, which are only concerned with the sex-categories through the filter of the social organization of lineality.

By assigning the transvestite performances of the Iatmul to a formal category of joking, we also gain the important insight through Douglas' (1968) treatment of this subject. Douglas suggests that any symbolic joke reflects a "social joke". There would be no articulation of jokes without an experience of a structural joke, a structural ambiguity. By articulating the joke one lives out the unspeakable structure, thereby obtaining a correspondence between all the levels of experience.

In the naven ceremonies the humorous element is not restricted to the laughter at excessive nature and at excessive culture, although these exaggerations add a dramatic quality to the performance. The more fundamental part of the joke is the clash of two distinct universes of discourse (Milner, 1972), the universes of male and female, which perhaps are more distinct in New Guinea than anywhere else. The reversal of sexual identities allows the audience, through the collision of universes, to grasp the fundamental distinction, and at the same time to experience a unity through duality, a complementarity, which is also somehow part of the daily social experience in spite of the cultural emphasis on

separation of the categories.

We hereby get back to the point, made by Douglas (1966) about disorder being a necessary prerequisite of order, ambiguity being necessary to unambiguity. The transgressing of the sexual boundary within naven reinforces distinct sex-categories. A move into the interstices of categories, which are the both/and or the neither/nor areas of conception, may not only invoke joking as a mode of reaction, but also taboo (Leach, 1964), of which avoidance is the classic social expression. These two modes of reaction to ambiguity, which in most cases exclude each other, are both present in the response to Iatmul transvestism. The obscene joking and the laughter are evident, but to the hero (or victim) of the naven ceremony the taboo is part of his response, since he may physically try to avoid his uncle and in any case feels strongly embarrassed.

The danger of transvestism lies in its negation of order, by which of course the same order is reinforced. The very sharp distinction between sex-categories thus becomes the structural "cause" of transvestism, of which the emotional ambivalence within certain dyadic relations then becomes the result. The emotions as such cannot explain behaviour, but the structure of emotions, which Bateson names ethos is nevertheless able to explain the shape of behaviour, since ethos is definitely part of the multiplex cultural programme. The concept of ethos is heavily influenced by the American "culture and personality" school, notably Benedict and Mead, but seen from today's anthropology, it only gains its full meaning in the light of the latest structuralist developments. It is only within this frame that anthropology can afford to give way to emotions again; and from here ethos has a heuristic value which reaches far beyond any definite school within anthropology.

Bateson found sex-specific ethoses among the Iatmul; the categories of male and female had distinct emotional structures, which in turn facilitate our understanding of the different shapes of the naven performances. To see this, we shall consider some aspects of the wider cultural context. If for a moment we look back-stage at the initiation rite for boys into the men's house, it is revealed that every stage of the rite stresses the opposition between the sexes, although in different ways. Through this the male ethos becomes part of the boys' experience, and the appropriate way of conceiving of women is learned. At the first stage the boys are spoken of as "wives" of the initiators, and this is more than just a play on words, since the novices are made to handle the genitals of their initiators. The boys are in every way made to feel uncomfortable and disgusting while they play the female role. At a later stage, the initiators act as "mothers", the initiated being their children, and now the picture is radically altered. In the first period, the men were very violent towards the novices and injured them with any thinkable method; the initiators exaggerated the tense relationship to their real wives and for the novices "the emphasis was upon making them miserable rather than clean" (Bateson, 1936, p.131), and we may be sure that this also holds good in the later developed

metaphorical sense of cleanliness or purity. When the "mothers" take over, they are very keen on making the novices comfortable, on the other hand. They hunt for them, and teach them a variety of things, such as how to make the male ornaments. It is characteristic that this teaching cannot take place within a male idiom (in a man-to-man relationship); the men should not learn from each other, they should compete with each other as equals. Only at the last stage of the initiation rite do the boys become men among men, and decked in their new ornaments they are exhibited to the (real) women, and the completion of the rite is celebrated with a naven ceremony.

The novice thus passes through three stages to become a man. At the first he is associated with the female sphere from which he came, and he experiences how to treat a wife and learns to despise her. In the next stage, he enters a more neutral state as "child", and he learns how to make the male ornaments, which are so important to the next stage, when he becomes a man among men and learns how to boast and to display his skills, including his skills in violence. When he has fully become a man he is feted with a naven ceremony, which through the temporary suspension of its sexual order is the final confirmation of the distinctiveness of the sexual categories, to one of which he now definitely belongs.

However the actual symbolic roles are played by the actors, every stage lends evidence to Bateson's conception of the inter- and intrasexual relationships. The two sex-categories stand in a complementary relation to each other, while the men stand in a symmetrical relationship to each other. From Iatmul evidence it is plain that the male/female relationship fits a description in terms of dominance/submission, active/passive etc. (in any case when seen from a male and an anthropological point of view). The internal male relationship is, on the other hand, described as one of constant brawling and violent competition, thus becoming a primitive armament race.

The submissive female ethos and the boasting male counterpart are apt instruments for explaining why men adopt an unpleasant female attire when undertaking the transvestite behaviour, while the women dress splendidly as successful male killers. These choices reinforce the sex-specific ethoses through the most extreme possible caricatures of the sexual ethical components, the complementarity of which may also be expressed in terms of spectacular culture/ugly nature. Hence naven-behaviour sustains the structure of emotions (ethos) as well as the structure of cognition (eidos). The Iatmul society is divided into moieties, and although it is not central to the argument, it is noteworthy that the principles of hierarchy and symmetry are so enforced that hierarchy governs the relations between the sexes, whereas symmetry reigns between the moieties. This is exactly opposite to the Tewa, (cf. Hastrup, 1974) who had sexual equality, but a hierarchy of moieties. Although it is true that the ranking of the Tewa moieties is not permanent but changes seasonally, the principle of hierarchy is never

questioned. It is part of the order that one moiety shall have precedence over the other, but it is likewise part of the order that the access to power shall alternate, and we may see an attempt to negate the hierarchy in this. The reason why this negation should be logical from the system's point of view is the very close association between the moieties and the equal sex-categories of the Tewa. The continuous competition and boasting between the Iatmul men, who as the generalized sex also represent the moieties, may be seen to complete the picture for the Iatmul, by an apparent attempt to negate the (symmetrical) equality by momentary gains and losses of individuals, whereby the intersexual hierarchy somehow becomes imposed upon the moieties.

For the Tewa equality dominates conceptually, for the Iatmul hierarchy dominates, but both principles are present in the structure of the dual classification of male and female. At one level the categories are antithetical but they are included into a synthesis of a higher logical order, to which the all-inclusive "man" belongs. The dual organization into moieties is just one among other means to socially express the cultural content of the male/female contradiction yet complementarity (in the "normal" sense of this word).

Without intending to reduce Bateson's concepts of complementarity and symmetry to the concepts of hierarchy and equality, respectively, we may nevertheless conclude that the latter set of terms represents the "frozen" logic behind the dynamics of the first set of concepts.

The preceding investigation into Iatmul transvestism brought us beyond the direct topic of this essay: the problem of women, by moving into more general problems of social anthropology. This is, however, not totally superfluous, since the position of women is a position within a larger system, and we need very general, yet specific, tools to grasp this position. Further, the problem of women requires all of the traditional anthropological apparatus reviewed through female glasses, to the extent that this is possible at all, and through this process some traditional analytic concepts lose their value, while others gain. The closer to pure logic, the more resistant will the concepts be to the female attack.

From the symbolic danger of ambiguous categories we shall now make a shift to a consideration of the more directly experienced danger of witchcraft, which at its base is also located in conceptual ambiguities. This shall be only a brief exposition with special reference to our topic of women, since Leach (1961) and Douglas (1966) have already outlined the general implications of boundarism as applied to witchcraft.

"Witchcraft" is here meant to denote a folk-theory of misfortune, that is an explanation of misfortune by reference to some uncontrolled mystical influence, which is located in particular inter-personal relationships. It is mostly the affinal relatives who are accused of witchcraft, since they, as both we and not-we, are sources of danger. The powers of the witches

are not due to voluntary malevolence, but to their involuntary occupation of the cracks in the social structure.

Since it is the women that more often than not play the men's game, indeed are their game, whether alliance or descent theory is part of the conscious model, it is natural that the women become key-persons in the mystical power relations, not only because they constitute the link to the affines in patrilineal societies, but also because they are themselves ambiguously classified.

In New Guinea this pattern is very obvious, since it is everywhere the women that are thought of as dangerous. The women are marginal to social structure, and they are marginal to the male ideology. (They are of course not marginal to themselves, but for the moment we are bound to use the male models, which to some extent may be seen as generalised.) Pollution and poison originate in women, and as they are not only in-between but also go-between, they pollute by themselves and in addition to this they bring poison from their natal group, the affines (Strathern, 1972).

That women should be marginal and thereby attributed with certain internal uncontrolled powers need not only be a correlate to an exogamous patrilineal organization. The Indian caste system also ascribes mystical powers to the women in some cases, and especially to the widows. In the case of a Brahmin caste described by Harper (1969), a widow is not allowed to remarry, which is not uncommon, but she must further shave her head and is no longer referred to as "she" but as "it". Of course this position of widows is rather special to these particular Brahmins, but it may have wider significance. Even where the defeminization is not so complete, we might argue that becoming a widow to some extent means a despecification of the woman. The course of life of a woman runs through the stages of the unspecified yet creative virgin, and next the specified woman, and last it is completed by a final reversal to the unspecificity of widowhood which at this stage is an impotent one. It is a trend from the ambiguous sexual potentiality, through the unambiguous sexual fertility, onto a complete lack of sexuality, deprived of any creativity. These stages of course are influential upon the position of individual women belonging to one of the categories, since they are so differently defined.

Maybe it is pushing the evidence a bit far to suggest that this trend is more general, but it is nevertheless to some degree part of our own experience. Although social anthropology is not reducible to common sense, the latter may have some contributions to anthropology, and in the present case, at least, it seems reasonable to suggest a comparison of the anthropological knowledge of the Havik Brahmins and the anthropologist's experience of the Danes.

It is a fact that we have different attitudes towards widows and widowers. Most of us tend to regard widows as somehow different from other women. It is hard to tell why and how exactly

they differ, but once a woman is labelled widow, she belongs to a category separated from other women, which category includes divorced women without any doubt. A happy widow is either considered a joke or just somewhat out of place. This has nothing to do with moral feelings about years of mourning, it is just that widows have been ascribed a new identity, by the standard of which "normal" life seems strange. This especially relates to young widows, I admit, and it shall also be understood that it will not apply to our widowed friends, since they stay "persons" more than anything else. It is the label, the category, which is ambiguous. As opposed to this, widowers are not only allowed but encouraged to "normal" life, including a normal sexual life. I suggest that the difference in expectancies directed towards men and women being widowed, originates in their pre-widowhood classification. As a specified category, the women are much more vulnerable to momentary disturbances in their environment. If they for a period (or for ever) are deprived of the possibility for acting out their special (natural) functions in reproduction and sex, within the legitimate frames provided by marriage, they lose their specificity, and once they are conceived of as ambiguous, they may also lose any potential for regaining it. On the other hand, men do not change their category affiliation, when they become widowed, since they are already generalized and fully capable of continuing their external social obligations, even though they for a while may be deprived of sex.

The actual position of widows in various societies of course differs enormously, but at least widowhood is very often a powerful symbol in varying contexts. We need only recall the Iatmul case, where the appearance of "pregnant widows" adds a further ridiculous female anomaly to the overarching transvestite ambiguity. This anomaly can be seen as a negative counterpart to virgin motherhood. Virgin mothers and widow mothers occupy the interstices between virgins, mothers and widows, which ought to be distinct categories, and they are therefore reacted to by joking or taboo, according to circumstances.

Considering once more the case of the Havik Brahmins, we must admit that the ambiguity of widows does not explain why women in general are thought of as dangerous, even though less so than widows. Given their danger we may a priori describe them as marginal, if Douglas's theory holds good, but in this case it cannot be due to any principles of lineality or exogamy. Harper suggests that "groups of adults who lack power and prestige, who generally do the bidding of others, and who have minimal control over their own social environment are likely to be portrayed as dangerous or malevolent beings in that society's belief-system." (Harper, 1969, p.81). The marginality of the Havik women is thus to be understood in relation to the access to authority. This is in accordance with Douglas, who states that the internal (uncontrollable) sources of power are vested in people with no formal access to the authority structure. The extreme polluting powers of the out-castes and the fear of the black-smiths in many African and Middle Eastern societies, and many other examples, are also explained by this kind of marginality. As a special female marginality it does not presuppose any particular social

organisation, it may belong to any, and it certainly does.

In this light we may also understand Lewis (1971), who throughout his book confirms a connection between sex-roles and certain kinds of possession. Lewis suggests that spirit possession is a socially acceptable, although dangerous, outlet for suppressed women. To the male system, witchcraft and spirit possession alike are sources of uncontrollable internal powers, and we may summarize that it is most often the women, who are the suspicious ones due to their marginality, however this be defined.

To take the New Guinea example again, women are here thought of as very dangerous to the society, and we may understand not only the specific example but all of the general matter further, if we consider the complementary (in Bateson's sense) relationship between the sex-categories. As previously stated, complementarity in this sense is a kind of processual generalization of a hierarchical relation, and we may see witchcraft (and parallel manifestations) as a kind of counteracting complementary power-relation. This means that where the submissive part of a complementary relation defined by dominance/submission, as e.g. the New Guinean woman, is attributed with some mystical powers, these react (reversely) upon the victims, who cannot but submit themselves in turn; there is no escape from this extreme source of dominance. The complementary witchcraft thus is a counteracting force to the schismogenetic process described by Bateson as originating in a primary relationship of complementarity between the sex-categories, or maybe other clearly defined categories.

Inversely I suggest that sorcery, or any other controlled external power, belongs to symmetrical relations, since counter-magic is likely to occur whereby it is indicated that sorcery is a first step in a dangerous competition between equals. Therefore sorcery is less likely to be bound to one sex-category than witchcraft. These generalizations about witchcraft and sorcery are of course mere suggestions, which need further investigation to be proved valuable. Thus they are not really pretending to be new answers but rather new questions, and as such they may contribute to a rethinking of current anthropological labels, as Crick (1973) has advocated.

So far we have considered the conceptual ambiguity of transvestism and we have briefly dealt with the kind of danger, which originates in 'marginality'. It remains to consider the danger of direct sexual contact, that is sexual pollution as such. This kind of pollution of course is closely related to the preceding ones, but we should nevertheless keep them separate, since they belong to different levels of reality and are characterized by different degrees of awareness.

To the individual, notions of sexual pollution constitute the most comprehensive articulation of what is more dimly known as cultural values, embracing the ideology of social structure, shared by all of the society. This ideological level may be conscious and articulate to some theoreticians of the culture, but at the same time it is related to a p-structural level of

relations, which as a coherent system is not articulate as such to anybody.

We have touched upon the aspect of sexual pollution at various points throughout this paper, and since it is also so fully documented by Douglas (1966), we shall content ourselves with just a brief sketch here. As a repetition of what was already mentioned in the section devoted to purity, we note that sexual contact "out of place" is not only dangerous to the individuals but also to their groups. This needs no further elaboration, but there is one interesting point to be considered.

Often it is only the one sex which is vulnerable to the pollution from the sexual act; most often it is the men who are endangered by the woman's sexuality and by her menstruations. It is not difficult to understand the danger of menstrual blood, since this is associated with "a child not to become", with death, and as both part of the woman and not so. These anomalies make menstrual blood a very powerful substance at the same time as it cleanses women at monthly intervals. The man is not cleansed in the same way, at least not by nature, but there are evidences of men who regularly inflict their genitals, thereby artificially invoking menstruations (e.g. Hogbin, 1970), to get cleansed from sexual pollution.

Thus the danger of menstruation as such in some ways explains why women are not as vulnerable to sexual pollution as the men. But it does not explain why the sexual act by itself is thought of as dangerous in some places. It is because the intercourse as such makes an anomalous being: both man and woman, the danger thus being explained by the psychoanalyst's answer to the riddle of the Sphinx. This may be, but why is the pollution not universal then, since intercourse is?

I do not claim to possess an answer to this "why", but I shall at least try to establish a correlation for the "how". We may use the Mae Enga and the Bemba as well-known examples, since they expose a very striking difference in the notion of sexual pollution: Among the Enga it is the women who pollute the men, among the Bemba it is a mutual pollution. This difference is correlated to a difference in the conception of the intersexual relationship, in terms of categories. To the Enga, women are classified in an analogous relation to the men as stated earlier; among the Bemba, the relation is digital.

In the analog relation it is natural that the "less" part has a negative influence upon the "more so", and this seems to be an explicit model among the Melpa (Strathern, 1972), where women are weak and the men are strong, and where too much association with the women will weaken the men. This one example is maybe not sufficient to legitimate why it should be "natural" that the negative influence is so directed. But we may also find some (theoretical) support in the fact that being "less" something is always being pushed towards marginality, where the uncontrollable powers originate. The power that stems from the "more" ones is quite another type of danger, external and more

formal, maybe even more realistic as such. On the other hand, when men and women are related by a digital type of classification, neither part is a priori more marginal than the other. Thus when sexual pollution occurs in these relationships, we should expect a two-way pollution as is the case for the Bemba.

The two logical types of classification were at an earlier stage tentatively correlated to ideologies of social structure, but bringing the correlation up to this point would squeeze the evidence too much, and we shall only conclude that one-way sexual pollution occurs in analog relations, while mutual sexual pollution belongs to digital relations, if any pollution occurs at all.

In the heading of this paper there is one more theme, which remains to be investigated: homosexuality. In terms of actual sexual behaviour, homosexuality may be seen as morally dangerous in the same way as transvestism, since it among other things shows a disregard for the continuity of the society. I believe that the average-westerner's horror of homosexuality is correlated to its extreme deomonstration of disrespect towards basic values, apart from its disrespect of sexual categories. The aversion is very much declining by now, and maybe this is a kind of moral adaptation to the fact of increasing overpopulation. But even in decline, the moral ambivalence persists.

In a wider cultural context, homosexuality is not necessarily dangerous, however. Cultural homosexuality must be considered as well as cultural transvestism, since this also may occur as part of some normal ritual context, e.g. in connection with initiation ceremonies. Often this kind of homosexuality will be seen as a kind of transvestism and interpreted as one of the parts assuming the opposite sex-role. The context of the act may suggest this interpretation, but in other cases, we should regard it as instances of cultural homosexuality proper. As such it gets another quality of meaning, since it must be perceived as pure. Cultural homosexuality is an expression of a desire for keeping one's own sexual category distinct. Thus where homosexuality is morally dangerous when one considers actual sexual behaviour or drives, it is classificatory pure when it constitutes a cultural event.

It may be true that cultural transvestism, as it occurs in e.g. shamanism, provides an outlet for actual individual homosexual drives, as suggested by Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg (1970), but this possibility explains nothing by itself and does certainly not diminish the need for distinguishing between them. It is evident that the reason why transvestism may provide an outlet for individual homosexuality, and we need not suppose that it is very often the case, is that the moral ambivalence of the latter through cultural transvestism is transformed into a socially recognized ambiguity.

From the preceding discussion of homosexuality and from the earlier investigation of virginity it is important to note that

purity and danger do not always belong to one or the other sphere of reality exclusively; . . . it may be a question of social spheres, but it is more profoundly a question of point of view and of analytical level.

To summarize part of the argument of this paper upon sexual boundaryism, I shall introduce a generalized version of the mathematical group-structure (cf. e.g. Barbut, 1966), which may serve as a useful tool for this summary. It looks like this:

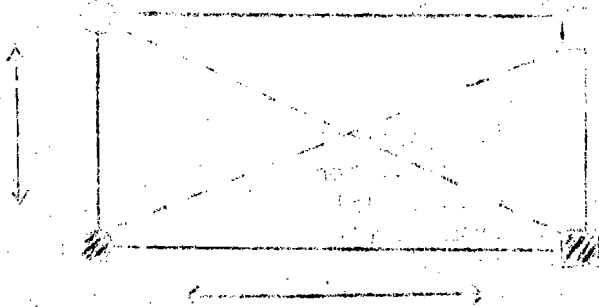


fig. 4

In this structure changes occur along two axes, in such a way that two directly connected elements share one feature, but differ with respect to another one, while two elements connected diagonally do not have any of the two diacritical features in common. In the diagram shown in fig. 4 this is illustrated by means of shape and shading.

Part of the content of the present paper may tentatively be brought into that same form, whereby the sexual boundary, at least to some extent, gets a rather tangible expression in theory.

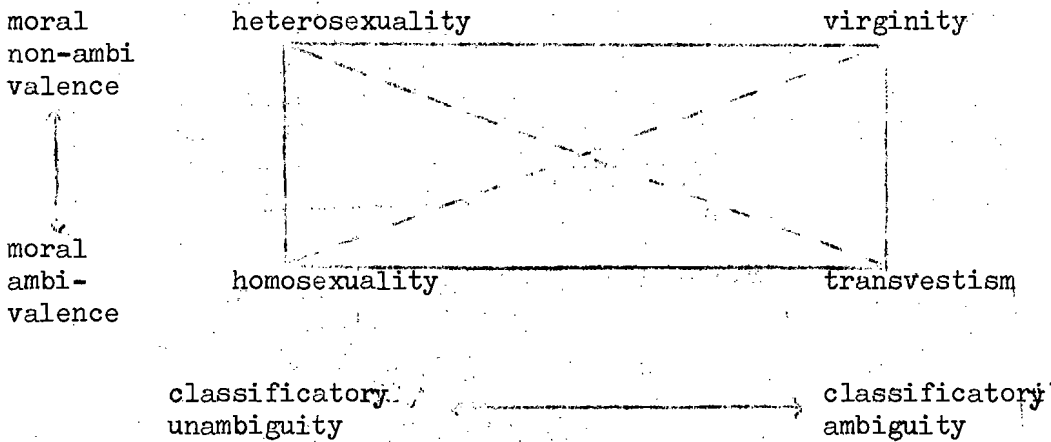


fig. 5

If we accept the premise that all of these terms do have a conceptual or cultural meaning as well as a behavioural aspect,

this scheme for interpretation of their pure and dangerous qualities may be a useful key to understanding the culture-specific evaluations of the sexual boundary, as this appears in different sexual relations, whether these are individual acts or cultural events.

Kirsten Hastrup

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Psychology of Religion Conference

The Conference is to be held on the 12th and 14th of January 1976; it is jointly sponsored by the Department of Psychology and Religious Studies, University of Lancaster. The theme will concern the current nature and status of the psychological study of religion. We hope that the discussion will involve such topics as the procedural and conceptual difficulties in the application of psychological techniques, and the role of psychological assumptions and theories in the anthropological study of religion. Anyone who is interested in coming to the Conference, or who is interested in contributing a paper, should write to the Conference organizers, Departments of Psychology and Religious Studies, University of Lancaster.

Steve Duck (Department of Psychology)
Paul Heelas (Department of Religious
Studies).