

Same-Sex Sexual Relations in Antiquity and Sexuality and Sexual Identity in Contemporary American Society

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In antiquity sexual identity was based on the natural fact of sex. Genitals determined gender. For ancient Israel the binary differentiation of male and female served as the structuring of both the natural and social worlds, and was guarded by the Holiness Code of Lev. 17. Same-sex sexual relations were forbidden, at least explicitly to men, and Christianity adopted and transmitted this ideology. The homosexuality that is condemned in the letters ascribed to Paul: Romans, 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy is identifiable as pederasty. There are no ancient texts that suggest that homosexual relationships existed between same-age adults. The word homosexuality first appeared in an English dictionary in 1892. Today the taxonomy of male and female is being subverted by science and technology.

Taxonomic classification, the typing or categorizing of human beings, was governed in earlier times by the natural fact of sex. Genitals determined gender. Accordingly humankind was divided into two types of human beings, male and female. The earliest literary texts of antiquity not only bear witness to this binary differentiation; they also evince them to be the dominant taxonomy by which other binary differentiations were symbolized in ancient cultures. The fertility of people and land appears to have been the primary determinant of the social construction of reality. It was the logocentric order of meaning that constituted the foundation of life, language and world; and religion, namely the temple and its priesthood, served as its guardian.

The Sumerian cycle of Inanna, two thousand years older than the Bible, transmits this dualistic ordering of reality determined by the binary differentiation of male and female. Already at the very beginning:

“When heaven had moved away from earth,
And earth had separated from heaven...”¹

Their differentiation was based on the natural fact of sex. The male sky god, An, set sail for the underworld and in his fierce sexual encounter with Ereshkigal, the goddess of the under-world, a *huluppu* tree was spawned and planted on the bank of the Euphrates. It was the tree of life, anchored in the underworld and growing heavenward. Because of its procreation by An and Ereshkigal, it was the embodiment of the dual forces of the universe: consciousness and unconsciousness, light and darkness, sun and moon, life and death, male and female. Inanna, the “Queen of Heaven” (also known as Ishtar), who was born of divine parents, appears out of

¹ Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983) 4.

nowhere, plucks the tree from the river and plants it in her holy garden. As she cares for it, her consciousness grows and expands, and her wishes and fears gradually emerge. She wants both a throne and a bed, rule and womanhood. A snake, a bird and Lilith appear giving embodiment to her wishes and fears. Unable to tame these creatures, she seeks help from her peers. Gilgamesh, the young king of Uruk, kills the snake, enters Inanna's garden and, although a divine mortal, shares the *huluppu* tree with her. Eventually he uproots the tree, and from its wood both a throne and a bed are constructed. Inanna will sit on the throne and lie on the bed; and accordingly her understanding of the mysteries of life and death will grow, particularly as she enters into a courtship with Dumuzi (in later tradition, Tammuz), experiences sexual relations with him and concomitantly promotes the fertility of land and people.²

The same taxonomy determines the creation myths of Gen 1-2., but, in contrast to the epic of Inanna and other earlier Mesopotamian myths, it does not serve as the foundation of the social construction of reality and its system of binary differentiations in ancient Israel. The creation and its cosmic order do not originate from a primordial struggle between the binary realities of male and female; nor are women identified with nature while men are representative of culture. Nevertheless, gender differentiation is a structural reality of creation and is therefore determinative of life in society. Although the man is created first in the earlier myth of Gen 2, he does not find companionship with the animals who share the garden of Eden with him. When he is confronted with the "helpfulness" that is embodied in the woman whom Yahweh fashioned from a chunk of flesh and bone taken from him, he - in contrast to Enkidu of the Gilgamesh Epic acknowledges:

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

This one shall be called *ishshah* for out of *ish* this one was taken." (Gen 2:23)

Consequently *ish* ("man") and *ishshah* ("woman") belong together. The male may be prior to the female, but he was formed out of the clay of the earth while she was created from his flesh and bone. Because of this common physicality which they share in their heterosexual difference, they are able to enjoy sexual union with each other. The patriarchal prejudice of the myth, however, attributes the actualization of that union to the initiative of the male:

"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his woman, and they become one flesh." (Gen 2:24)

Whether they recognized their sexual difference from the outset or whether they became aware of it after they had partaken of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil is irrelevant to the basic premise of gender differentiation that is implicit in the myth.³

The Priestly account of creation in Gen 1:1-2:3 culminates in the creation of the godlike humanity of *adam* who from the beginning is both male and female.

² Wolkstein and Kramer, *Inanna* 7-49, 136-155.

³ Robert B. Coote and David R. Ord, *The Bible's First History: From Eden to the Court of David with the Yahwist* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 59. For their views on the attempted homosexual rape of Abraham's two divine visitors by the men of Sodom, see 127-131.

“And God said, ‘Let us make *adam* in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heaven and over cattle and over the whole earth. And God created the *adam* in his image; in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and grow large and fill the earth.’” (Gen 1:26-28)

Adam, the human being, on the one hand, is unlike all the other creatures God brought into being. As Ps 8:5 stipulates, *adam* is “little less than God,” and therefore is designated to govern the creation on behalf of the Creator. Divine likeness is essential to the fulfillment of this commission in order to enable the earth to sustain life. But *adam* as a humanity of two genders is also like all other created life. Ontologically constituted as male and female, humanity is also commissioned to fulfill the divine mandate of procreation, “...be fruitful and grow large and fill the earth.” As Phyllis Bird writes,

“*Adam* is creature who ... is given the power of reproduction through the word-act of creation, receiving it in the identical words of blessing addressed first to the creatures of sea and sky (v22). It is in relation to this statement that the specification, “male and female he created them,” must be understood. The word of sexual differentiation anticipates the blessing and prepares for it.”⁴

Accordingly the integrity of this primordially established differentiation of male and female is guarded by the Holiness Code of Lev 17-26. There can be no compromise of sexual identity. Created as a male, a man must remain pure and unblemished in his nature of maleness. To surrender it sexually by assuming the role of the opposite sex is a desecration of the divine order of creation.⁵ Same-sex sexual relations, therefore, are forbidden, explicitly at least to men.

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”
(NRSV Lev 18:22)

or literally according to the Hebrew text:

“And (with) the male you shall not cohabit the cohabitings (with) a woman; it is an abomination.” Death is the sentence which the Holiness Code pronounces on such a desecration of the divinely created order of male and female. “And a man who cohabits (with) a male the cohabitings (with) a woman, the two have done an abomination. They shall be put to death.” (Lev 20:13)

Determined by the creation myths of Gen 1-2, Israelite culture and socialization propagated the ontology of the binary differentiation of male and female. Physiology established gender

⁴ Phyllis A. Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them”: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” HTR 74:2 (1981) 147. Also 148, “*Unlike* God, but *like* the other creatures, *adam* is characterized by sexual differentiation.”

⁵ Victor Paul Furnish, “The Bible and Homosexuality: Reading the Tests in Context,” *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*, ed. by Jeffrey S. Siker (Westminster John Knox, 1994) 20; Juergen Becker, “Zum Problem der Homosexualität in der Bibel,” *Annäherungen. Zur urchristlichen Theologiegeschichte und zum Umgang mit ihren Quellen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) 398-401, in which Becker attributes the practise of “homosexuality” in Israel to the imitation of Canaanite fertility cult prostitution and claims that it is implied in 1 Ki 15:12; 22:47; 2 Ki 23:7.

identity, and sexual practice conformed to or violated “conventionally defined gender roles.” All inversions were denounced as abominations.

Early Christianity inherited and transmitted this ideology. The New Testament gospels preserve traditions in which Jesus affirms the gender differentiation of the Genesis creation myths. In the more radical Marcan tradition (10:2-9) Jesus rejects the Mosaic legislation on divorce because of its compromise of the divine order of creation by making concessions to human weaknesses that promote separation.

“But from the beginning he made them male and female. On account of this a human being will leave his father and mother, and the two will become one flesh.”

God’s will is expressed in the realization of union between the two sexes. The separation of divorce not only annuls the original design of creation but also the eschatological reality of the rule of God and its reconstitution of all things which Jesus is inaugurating. The binary differentiation of male and female is intrinsic to the restructuring of the moral order.

This conflict tradition on divorce was adopted by the Evangelist Matthew; but the narrative structure of the story was revised so that Jesus himself could negate the Mosaic legislation of Deuteronomy by means of the Mosaic traditions of Genesis. By citing the foundational texts of Israel’s scriptural heritage Jesus can add his messianic authority to the divine order of creation.

“Do you not know that the creator from the beginning made them male and female?”
(Matt 19:4)

After acknowledging the binary realities of male and female on the basis of Gen 1:27, Jesus endorses the corresponding divine will of Gen 2:24.

“On account of this a human being will leave father and mother and be joined to his woman and the two will be one flesh.” (Matt 19:5)

Nevertheless, the order of creation and its fulfillment in the heterosexual relationship of male and female cannot always be realized. The exacting ideal of Jesus’ teaching elicits the alternative of singleness from the disciples: “If such is the case of the man with the woman, it is better not to marry.” Jesus validates such an option but with an admission of its severity:

“Not all grasp this word, but to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who became thus from the mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were castrated by human beings, and there are eunuchs who castrated themselves on account of the rule of the heavens.”
(19:11-12)

Although the divine order of creation may accentuate gender differentiation for sexual union and procreation, the absence of male genitals as well as the commitment to celibacy do not preclude the realization of human integrity and wholeness promoted by the rule of God.⁶

⁶ Herman C. Waetjen, *The Origin and Destiny of Humanness: An Interpretation of the Gospel according to Matthew* (San Rafael: Crystal Press, 1976) 194.

There are no implications here regarding same-sex unions. Moreover, no explicit or implicit teaching of Jesus on this matter has been transmitted by the gospels. Speculation may be futile, but on the basis of the tradition that has been preserved it is reasonable to assume that his orientation as a Jew was determined by the created order of male and female.

It is in other writings of the New Testament, specifically 1 Corinthians, Romans, and 1 Timothy, that the issue of same-sex sexual relations emerges. Although all three are attributed to the Apostle Paul, only 1 Corinthians and Romans are generally considered to be authentic.⁷ The text of 1 Cor. 6:9-10 denominates the two types of individuals who engage in pederasty. In Rom 1:26-27 Paul includes same-sex unions among women and men in his analysis of the universal condition of *hamartia* (sin) and its downward-spiraling movement into living death. The addressees of these letters live and participate in a social construction of reality in which homoeroticism was expressed in the form of pederasty and perhaps also lesbianism.⁸

In Plato's dialogue, *Symposium*, Aristophanes contends that originally "there were three kinds of human beings, not two as now, male and female; there was a third kind as well which had equal shares of the other two, and whose name survives though the thing itself has vanished."⁹ It is "androgynon" or the androgynous, a "unity composed of both sexes and sharing equally in male and female." Originally, according to Aristophanes, these three types were "round all over," "globular in shape," reflecting their origin as the offspring of the sun (the male), the earth (the female) and the moon (the androgynous being). Each had four arms and four legs, four ears, two sets of genitals, only one head but with two faces, each looking in the opposite direction. They were powerful creatures and "so lofty in their notions that they even conspired against the gods."¹⁰ Zeus refused to destroy them, but in order to limit their power he sliced them in two, and, with the assistance of Apollo, pulled their skin over the exposed flesh and "tied it up in the middle of the belly, so making what we know as the navel."

Each half, as a result of this separation, would search for its counterpart and from the moment of reunion would concentrate all its energies on enfolding the other in a perpetual embrace in an effort to recover original wholeness. Ignoring their bodily needs in this desperate condition, many of them eventually died of starvation. Those who survived would look for others who belonged to the same sex and perpetuate the struggle for their primordial unity. In his pity Zeus

"moved their privy parts to the front ... to be used for propagating on each other - in the female members by means of the male; so that if in their embracements a man should happen on a woman there might be conception and continuation of their kin; and also, if male met with male they might have some satiety of their union and a relief, and so might turn their hands to their labors and their interest in ordinary life."¹¹

⁷ 1 Tim 1:10 is omitted because it has nothing to contribute to the direction of this discussion. In contrast to Gal 3:19 and Rom 3:30, its pseudonymous author maintains that the law is laid down for various types of ungodly people, among whom are named *arsenokoitai* (pederasts), the same word that Paul employs - and perhaps coined - in 1 Cor 6:9.

⁸ Aristotle, however, is oriented toward a taxonomy of male and female. See *De Generatione Animalium*, I, 730a-731a. Also *Historia Animalium* 1.2.489a 10-14 where Aristotle defines "male" as emitting into another and "female" as emitting into itself in order to ground difference in anatomy and physiology. For a discussion of these and other texts, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992), especially the chapter entitled, "Destiny is Anatomy," 25-62.

⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, 189 D-E, trans. by W.R.M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard, 1967).

¹⁰ *Symposium*, 190 B.

¹¹ *Symposium*, 191 B,C,D.

Consequently the two halves of each type that was cut in two would naturally search for each other and express their reunion in sexual relations. The androgynous, of course, would be heterosexual, the male half uniting with the female half or visa versa. Of them, Aristophanes observes, “Our adulterers are mostly descended from that sex, whence likewise are derived our man-courting women and adulteresses.” Female halves, having “no great fancy for men,” will search for their female counterparts. And lastly:

“Men who are sections of the male pursue the masculine, and so long as their boyhood lasts they show themselves to be slices of the male by making friends with men and delighting to lie with them and to be clasped in men’s embraces; these are the finest boys and striplings, for they have the most manly nature. Some say they are shameless creatures, but falsely: for their behavior is due not to shamelessness but to daring, manliness, and virility, since they are quick to welcome their like.”¹²

The surprise here is the objective of the search in which the sliced male halves engage: not for same-sex unions with age-matched counterparts, but with boys! As David M. Halperin has observed,

“...although his genetic explanation of the diversity of sexual object-choice among human beings would seem to require that there be some adult males who are sexually attracted to other adult males, Aristophanes appears to be wholly unaware of such a possibility, and in any case he has left no room for it in his taxonomic scheme.”¹³

Halperin concludes:

“No age-matched couples figure among their latter-day offspring, however: in the real world of classical Athens - at least as Aristophanes portrays it - reciprocal erotic desire among males is unknown.”¹⁴

and again:

“Those Athenians who allegedly descend from a mythical all-male ancestor are not defined by Aristophanes as male homosexuals but as willing boys when they are young and as lovers of youths when they are old. Despite Boswell, then, neither the concept nor the experience of “homosexuality” is known to Plato’s Aristophanes.”¹⁵

¹² *Symposium*, 192 A.

¹³ David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 20-21. For a discussion of sexual desire and friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu and David and Jonathan, see Chapter 4 entitled, “Heroes and Their Pals.”

¹⁴ Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 21.

¹⁵ Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 21; also n. 32, 161. For Boswell’s view, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago:University, 1980).

In an earlier speech of Plato's *Symposium* Pausanias reinforces this pederastic paradigm of same-sex sexual relations in Greek culture but at the same time offers a more idealistic perspective. Love is to be praised, but since there are two Loves, the Popular Aphrodite and the Heavenly Aphrodite, the one that is superior and therefore also authentic must first be identified. The Love that belongs to the former, Popular Aphrodite, is evident in

“the meaner sort of men, who, in the first place, love women as well as boys; secondly, where they love, they are set on the body more than the soul; and thirdly, they choose the most witless people they can find, since they look merely to the accomplishment and care not if the manner be noble or not.”¹⁶

The other Love, according to Pausanias,

“springs from the Heavenly goddess who, first, partakes not of the female but only of the male; and secondly, is the elder, untinged with wantonness. ... they love boys only when they begin to acquire some mind - a growth associated with that of down on their chins. For I perceive that those who begin to love them at this age are prepared to be always with them and share all with them as long as life shall last: they will not take advantage of a boy's green thoughtlessness to deceive him and make a mock of him by running straight off to another.”¹⁷

It is this kind of sexual inversion that expresses itself in pederasty that is condemned by Paul in 1 Cor 6:9-10.

“Or do you not know that unjust individuals will no inherit the rule of God? Do not be deceived! Neither prostitutes nor idolaters nor adulterers nor *malakoi* (soft ones) nor *arsenokoitai* (pederasts) nor thieves nor greedy people nor drunkards nor abusive persons nor swindlers will inherit the rule of God.”

Participation in God's rule, according to the Apostle, is a present possibility, but it excludes those who perpetrate injustice of one kind or another. All these types that he has named do injury to others or to themselves or both. Among them are the *malakoi* and the *arsenokoitai*. Although these two words are translated and therefore also interpreted differently, their juxtaposition, in the light of the distinctive kind of same-sex sexual relations to which the literature and art of the Mediterranean world of antiquity bear witness, indicates that they refer to those who involved themselves in pederasty. *Malakoi*, an adjective that literally means “soft ones” or “unmanly ones,” most likely refers to boys or young men between the ages of eleven and seventeen who, because they had not yet grown a beard or pubic hair, bore a likeness to young women and were attractive to older men.¹⁸ *Arsenokoitai*, on the other hand, is a word which appears to have no prior history in the Greek language, and, as is generally surmised, may have been coined by the

¹⁶ *Symposium*, 181 B.

¹⁷ *Symposium*, 181 C.

¹⁸ K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1989) 79-80; Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 22-24; Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 24-28.

Apostle himself by combining *arsen* (male) and *koitos* (bed), two words that are contiguous in Lev 18:22 and especially in 20:13.

Very likely the pederastic ideal that Pausanias articulated in the *Symposium* was seldomly achieved. Power and exploitation usually characterized the nature of that relationship.¹⁹ The youth (designated the *eromenos* in the Greek texts) was required to be submissive and passive, while the older man (the *erastes*) initiated the coitus and enjoyed the self-gratification it offered. Generally the relationship was terminated by the latter when the youth showed signs of reaching adulthood by growing a beard.²⁰ The older man would search for a new *eromenos* or *malakos*, while the young man, who had reached adulthood, would eventually assume the role of the *erastes* and initiate sexual relations with a youth. Accordingly the cycle of pederasty would continue.²¹

In view of the other types of individuals that are named alongside of the *malakoi* and the *arsenokoitai*, it seems doubtful that Paul is excluding both, the youth and the adult male, from participation in the rule of God on the basis of the stipulations of the purity code of Lev 18 and 20. All of them: prostitutes, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusive persons, and swindlers, as well as “the soft ones” and their adult male lovers, engage in activities that are destructive to the humanity of others or themselves. All of them are either victimizers dominating and exploiting others or victims who for one reason or another allow themselves to be dominated and dehumanized. As long as they continue in their injustice, oppression, enslavement, they are incapable of receiving the gifts which the rule of God imparts: transcendence into freedom, possibility and the fullness of life.

It is the eschatological reality of God’s rule, constituted by Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, that determines Paul’s ethical teaching. “For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation. Peace and mercy on those who adhere to/follow this *kanon* (measuring stick).” (Gal 6:15-16)

Circumcision and uncircumcision, the clean and the unclean: all such dualistic realities structured by the purity code have been superseded by “the ministry of justice” (2 Cor 3:9). All pollution systems which divide the world into the binary oppositions of the sacred and the secular have been abrogated. The moral order of the new creation and its ministry of justice is the emerging reality of “the One and the Many,” that is, the Body of Christ.

“For even as the body is *one* and has *many* members, and all the members of the body being *many* are *one* body, so also the Christ.” (1 Cor 12:12)

The spontaneous outcome of participating in this Body of the One and the Many, the new creation, the eschatological rule of God, manifests itself in doing justice, “ruling in life” (Rom

¹⁹ Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 30, “Sexual ‘activity,’ moreover, is thematized as domination: the relation between the ‘active’ and ‘passive’ sexual partner is thought of as the same kind of relation as that obtaining between social superior and social inferior.” See also K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 100-109, and Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale, 1992).

²⁰ Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 88, “In particular, Greek men seem to have regarded the presence of hair upon the cheeks, thighs, and hindquarters of maturing youths with intense sexual distaste...”

²¹ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 16, 57-59, 91-100.

5:17) and being fully alive (2 Cor 3:18). This excludes those who engage in pederasty, as well as the other types that are named by the Apostle in 1 Cor 6:9-10.

The text of Rom 1:26-27 is embedded in 1:18-32, the opening statement of a lengthier diagnosis of the human condition. Impiety and injustice, according to Paul, are the ultimate cause of the universal infection of sin. Impiety, the transgressions of the first table of the Law, induces injustice, transgressions of the second table of the Law, and both bring their own moral retribution. The disavowal of God produces futile reasonings and a senseless heart which in turn engender idolatry. The resulting condition of alienation from God coincidentally produces alienation from self, and in this circumstance of exile “the wrath of God,” is actualized and human beings are handed over to the consequences of their actions.

“Wherefore God delivered them up in the lusts of their hearts unto *uncleanness* to dishonor their bodies among themselves. Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshipped and served the creature in place of the Creator, who is blessed forever.” (Rom 1:24-25)

It is in this analytical context that the Apostle acknowledges the condemnation which the Levitical code pronounces on the desecration of the human body by compromising its gender. The disease of estrangement generates “passions of dishonor.” “For,” as he continues,

“their females exchanged their natural intercourse for the one contrary to nature; likewise also the males, leaving the natural use of the female, were consumed in their lust for one another, males with males working that which is shameful and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” (Rom 1:26-27)

For Paul, as for his contemporaries, sex is a natural fact, and it establishes gender identity. The sexual inversion of the binary differentiation of male and female, therefore, is not only dishonorable; it is a symptom of alienation and idolatry that produces its own retribution. “The due penalty of their error,” to use Paul’s phrase, must be another instance of “the wrath of God;” but in this case being delivered up or fated to a worthless consciousness that diffuses into society the living death to which it is doomed.

Very little is said of the same-sex sexual relations of women in the literature and art of antiquity; it was “a taboo subject.”²² As already noted, it was acknowledged by Aristophanes in the *Symposium*. Plato refers to it in *The Laws*, along with the same-sex sexual relations of men, but with the identical judgment expressed by the Apostle Paul in the use of the prepositional phrase, *para physin* (contrary to nature).²³ The evidence that Sappho of Lesbos offers in her poetry is “fragmentary,” “fragile and ambiguous.”²⁴ The correlate words, “lesbian” and “lesbianism,” that are in currency today, are avoided by K.L. Dover in his discussion of “Women and Homosexuality” because of their adverse use in Greek society. The extravagant and uninhibited language which was employed to express relations between women and girls “hardly

²² Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 182. Also 171-184.

²³ Compare Plato, *The Laws* I 636c, trans. by R.G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard, 1961) with Rom 1:26.

²⁴ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 181.

suffices to tell us whether Sappho, the girls of Lesbos and the members of Alkman's choruses sought to induce orgasms in one another by bodily contact."²⁵

There is no differentiation between the *malakoi* (the boy pederasts) and the *arsenokoitai* (the adult pederasts) in this general reference of 1:27 to male same-sex unions. It should not be assumed, therefore, that this lack of specification also encompasses the practice of same-sex sexual relations between male adults of more or less the same age. As already stated, no evidence of male age-matched couples engaging in sexual activities is to be found in antiquity.

Paul's analysis of the causes and effects of the human disease of sin that permeates society extends beyond 1:18-32 and includes 2:1-3:20. His summation is finally pronounced in 3:9, "For we already charged all both Jews and Greeks to be under *hamartian* (sin);" and is supported by a series of texts drawn from the Septuagint. Rom 1:18-3:20, therefore, is the indispensable grounding for the subsequent explication of the Christ event and the salvation or healing of the human infection which it inaugurates (5:1-21). Accordingly, an entirely different purpose underlies the reference to sexual inversion in 1:26-27. Consequently it has no relevance for the ethics of the eschatological reality of God's rule.

In the Mediterranean world of antiquity, in which Paul and the other writers of the biblical texts participated, gender was determined on the basis of the natural fact of sex, and the attendantly established taxonomy of male and female served as the basis of social and cultural relations. In spite of various significant changes that have occurred in modern times, however, both: the identification of sex and gender and its concomitant binary differentiation of male and female, are presupposed to be foundational for structuring the social and cultural conventions of today. In actuality neither of them can or should be normative any longer. Their validity has been canceled once and for all by the paradigm shift that has occurred in last 150 years.

Sexual identity, as well as sexual role, is no longer defined on the basis of genitals. The modern invention of sexuality has superseded the natural fact of sex and has been constituted as a "principle of the self."²⁶ Originating as a cultural production from the sciences of physiology, anatomy, psychology, sexuality individuates human beings according to their sexual predilection and thereby establishes sexual identity apart from the taxonomy of male and female and its conventionally defined roles.²⁷ As Halperin contends,

"Sexuality ... turns out to be something more than an endogenous principle of motivation outwardly expressed by the performance of sexual acts; it is a mute power subtly and deviously at work throughout the wide range of human behaviors, attitudes, tastes, choices, gestures, styles, pursuits, judgment, and utterances. Sexuality is thus the inmost part of an individual human nature. It is the feature of a person that takes longest to get to know well, and knowing it renders transparent and intelligible to the knower the person to whom it belongs. Sexuality holds the key to unlocking the deepest mysteries of the human personality: it lies at the center of the hermeneutics of the self."²⁸

Homosexuality and heterosexuality, therefore, are modern orientations that pre-suppose the socio-cultural constructs of sexuality. Both terms in fact originated a little more than one

²⁵ Dover, 181-182.

²⁶ Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 24..

²⁷ Halperin, 25.

²⁸ Halperin, 26.

hundred years ago. Charles Gilbert Chaddock, “an early translator of Krafft-Ebing’s classic medical handbook of sexual deviance, the *Psychopathia Sexualis*, is credited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* with having introduced “homo-sexuality” into the English language in 1892, in order to render a German cognate twenty years its senior.”²⁹ The word “heterosexuality” evidently appeared seven years later.

Consequently, none of the texts of the Bible’s two Testaments which deal with sexual deviance can or should be related to what today is being called “homosexuality.” Moreover, as a result of the inauguration of the rule of God and its eclipse of the Levitical purity code, all pollution systems and their attendant ethical norms have been canceled. Heterosexual and homosexual, therefore, must not be constituted as a binary opposition in which the former is affirmed as “clean” while the latter is rejected as “unclean. Given the realities of sexuality as conceptualized, experienced, and institutionalized human nature, both homosexuality and heterosexuality may be represented in the Body of Christ, the new creation of the One and the Many. That implies, of course, that both are subject to the ethical norms of God’s rule and therefore are expected to give embodiment to the new humanization which it makes possible.

Another aspect of the paradigm shift in human sexuality is the growing acknowledgement of the realities of *intersex*. The taxonomy of female and male is inadequate to account for the many gradations between these binary categories. Anne Fausto-Sterling identifies three major subgroups: true hermaphrodites who possess one testis and one ovary, male pseudohermaphrodites who have testes and some aspects of the female genitalia but no ovaries, and female pseudohermaphrodites who have ovaries and some aspects of the male genitalia but lack testes.³⁰ Moreover, she contends that “... sex is a vast, infinitely malleable continuum that defies the constraints of even five categories.”³¹ It is conjectured that at least four percent of all births are intersexual. Society, however, determined by the ideology of gender based on genitals, and apprehensive and insecure with the ambiguities of intersex, forces them into one or the other of the two prevailing genders and by enlisting the services of the legal and medical communities erases the intersexual gradations. But as Martine Rothblatt argues, “If there are no hard and fast sex types, then there can be no apartheid of sex.”³²

Today the binary differentiation of male and female is being subverted by science and technology. Human beings, therefore, can no longer be viewed as simply sex types belonging to one of the two categories of the heterosexual taxonomy. Individuated as a self by the constitutive principle of their sexuality, they give expression to “a wide range of human behaviors, attitudes, tastes, choices, gestures, styles, pursuits, judgments, and utterances,” as Halperin has specified.³³ Accordingly, the baptismal formula utilized by the Apostle Paul in Gal 3:28 which negates the fundamental binary differentiations of the ancient world is equally pertinent today, especially the last of the three.

²⁹ Halperin, 15. See especially note 2, 155.

³⁰ Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes. Why Male and Female Are Not Enough,” *The Sciences*, March/April 1993, 21.

³¹ Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes,” 21. At the conclusion of her article, on page 24, she imagines another world in which, “Patient and physician, parent and child, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual - all these oppositions and others would have to be dissolved as sources of division. A new ethic of medical treatment would arise, one that would permit ambiguity in a culture that had overcome sexual division.”

³² Martine Rothblatt, *The Apartheid of Sex. A Manifesto on the Freedom of Gender* (New York: Crown, 1995) 19.

³³ Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 26.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, *neither male and female*. For you are all *one* in Christ Jesus.”

In the new creation all pollution systems, which separated human beings from each other and discriminated against those categorized as unclean and therefore sinful, are invalid. Consequently, if all binary oppositions have been transcended, especially the binary realities of male and female - which for Paul is a differentiation and not an opposition like “slave or free” or “Jew or Greek” - the actuality of many individuated selves of human beings, regardless of their sexual or intersexual physiology, regardless of their homo- or hetero-sexuality, can be united as one Body to constitute the New Humanity of Christ Jesus. This is the vision which can be derived from the writings of the Apostle Paul and which the Church of today can begin to actualize and thereby fulfill its destiny as the pioneer of a new moral order.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10: 25-37 not only subverts the binary opposition between the Jew and the Samaritan, the clean and the unclean; it also provides an illustration of the ethics of transcending any and every pollution system in order to minister to the needs of others, regardless of race, sex or class. But the paradigm shift of the ground from which ethical responses originate, which the context of the parable transmits, makes the parable even more apposite for the critical issue of living a life in a world of the One and the Many without the defenses of a pollution system. The lawyer’s question, “Who is my *plesion*?” –meaning “next one” and not “neighbor”—poses the problem of drawing lines in order to determine who is to be admitted into my world for relationships and the help and support which those relationships may necessitate. Jesus responds, not only by telling the story of the Good Samaritan, but at the conclusion by substituting a reformulation of the original question: “Who of the three was a *plesion*, a next one, to the one who fell among the bandits?” In other words, the new question is: to what fellow human being can I be a “next one?” Instead of drawing lines in order to build an ordered and safe world, the challenge is to act for and with those who are in trouble, disadvantaged, or marginalized. As T.W. Manson phrased it, “Love does not begin by defining its objects; it discovers them.”³⁴

...Ach, wir

Die wir den Boden bereiten wollten für Freundlichkeit
Konnten selber nicht freundlich sein.

...Alas, we

Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
Could not ourselves be kind.³⁵

³⁴ T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1937) 261.

³⁵ Bertolt Brecht, “An die Nachgeborenen,” *Selected Poems*, Translation and Introduction by H.R. Hays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1987) 176-177.