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THE NATURE AND CULTURE OF GENDER IDENTITY

Bachelor Thesis

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Preface

This paper talks about gender identity and sexuality. Although maybe not so obvious in the text, since I rarely refer to myself or the speaker as *the I*, this is a personal subject matter, and through writing this my aim has been to clear this matter up to myself, as well as to other people. The lack of apparent *I* doesn't mean that this *I* is not there, since it has not only been a simple Bachelor Thesis, which I need to do in order to graduate, but my aim has been throughout this paper to explain the trouble of gender as it really is and through doing so, my wish has been to, through becoming more knowledgeable and qualified myself, use this information to make a change in the real world, which in my mind, is a change for the better.

Although academic philosophy is often thought of as theoretical field, and this is also true for this paper, the purpose of it goes beyond theory and, I believe, should and could be applied to real world and real people.

The trouble with gender is not something I've picked up through my university years or something that someone has pointed out for me, but rather I have always felt that the so called natural attributes of gender either do not apply to me conclusively and fully, or that these attributes are simply not what they claim to be. This first understating, led me to speculate over gender identity, and discuss it with other people, which in return made me realize that fixed gender attributes of either female or male gender are probably not true for anybody or if they are, they are not natural attributes and necessarily given.

If homosexuals feel the need to parade, so that their sexuality could be perceived as it is, so that *they* could be perceived as they are, then I feel the need to parade, so that my gender identity could be seen for what it is, so that *I* could be seen for what I am and not for what I am not. Coming out as a feminist, I believe, is not very different from coming out as a gay person, and similar social mockery usually follows. I feel, however, that this is mostly due to lack of knowledge or presence of false knowledge, which leaves people with the wrong assumption of natural gender. This in turn is expressed with fear disguised as anger against all genders that fall outside of the ruling social standards. And also, most people are simply afraid of change or anything different, when they haven't experienced it before. It follows, thus, that in order for all genders and sexualities to be socially and politically accepted, we need to educate people on more than just two genders and just one sexuality.

This is also personal, because even though I have always had the notion of gender being a

fabrication, I have presented myself and acted in accordance with the female gender which has been appointed for me, but these ways have been in direct conflict with who I have perceived myself as, and ways which (looking back) I see no need for. I have done so only because I have felt the social pressure to *be a woman* in certain ways, but this being a woman has not left me with fulfilment or satisfaction. It has not left me with the feeling of portraying myself or portraying something that gives me more value or gives the society as a whole more value. Thus, I believe, this can be true for other people, and we act out our roles not because it makes us happy, but because we are constantly following the social norms, afraid of being different and afraid of social mockery or expulsion.

I want to thank Ele Pajula for bringing me to philosophy, Andres Luure for teaching me to think, my partner Heinrich Rahe for listening, understanding and also for being a critical opponent, which has helped me to see the flaws in my thinking, and my supervisor Klemen Slabina, thanks to whom I have learned so much only during a course of one year and without whom my understanding of this subject would be far from what it is today.

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Introduction

In this paper I will address the problem of gender identity. As humans we like to believe that within ourselves is a *selfness*, a soul, or some fundamental *me-ness*, that ultimately defines us. My body and soul are two different things, where the first is only a shell that covers my soul, the one thing that really makes me *me*. We are called to act 'like ourselves' and free ourselves from any social manipulation, which usually is expressed through individual belief system or some less essential things, like a way of dressing. It is important to note that this soul or *me-ness* is considered natural, and thus there is only one natural and right way for a person to be and act.

The first category that defines us and which we take as essential part of our identities is seeing ourselves gendered. This first separation awaits us already when we are born and thus is the first category through what people see us, and later we ourselves define ourselves through. It is a universal category, though different traits can be and are attached to these categories in different societies, the distinction is made nevertheless. In this paper I am going to attack that belief of natural gender and show how the concept of natural gender is first of all and always a discourse. I will show how everything within gender is socially constructed, by which I mean both existential and less essential traits of gender. If gender is a discourse it allows us to inspect gender as a cultural fact. Hence, the research on gender is always a research of culture and how it designs us.

I have divided my thesis into two large chapters. I will start out with Levi-Strauss and his conception of social structures and the incest taboo. In using structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss my aim is to show how structures in our society are creating the things we see as natural, but in reality are nothing more than social constructions. Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology is an idea that people tend to think about the world in term of binary opposites. In the case of this paper understanding masculinity and femininity are, thus, where Levi-Strauss's ideas come to help me.

I will then continue with Althusser, introducing his understanding of ideologies. I will show how ideology represents imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence, also creating the modes of domination. This concept however is never conclusive. Though we do live under ideology, it does not define us or our relationship with the world conclusively. By introducing Bourdieu's concept of habitus, my aim is to show that we are able to exercise choices within the limits of any social structure

or ideology. Structure *limits* the individual, but does not *define* him.

Coming back to Levi-Strauss I will introduce the concept of the incest taboo, which being a social prohibition itself, creates a situation where women are being dominated by men. I will also introduce Freud's concept of the incest taboo, which ultimately has the same outcome, but for Freud it is through incest taboo that a child develops a 'normal' sexuality. With the incest taboo weighing heavy on his shoulders, the child will turn his desire for the parent of the opposite sex towards other people of that sex. It is important to note that heterosexuality is being assumed and, thus, as Butler points out it is not only the incest taboo that govern child's sexual desire, but also the law for heterosexuality and therefore a taboo of homosexuality.

I will continue with the constructions of heterosexual discourse and Foucault, who shows that we are transforming our desire, our sexuality into a discourse. The notion of 'sex', as Foucault claims, has made it possible to group together in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, sensations and pleasures and present them as a causal principle.

In the second half of my paper I will introduce Oakley and with her the act of parenting, which through manipulation, canalization, verbal appellation and activity exposure are teaching the child his appointed gender role. Throughout my whole text I will consider Butler's "Gender Trouble" and her conception of how sex, as well as gender, is a social construction. When Beauvoir claims that "one is not born a woman, but rather *becomes* one" she illustrates the traditional feminist concept of sex-gender distinction excellently. Butler, however, claims that sex itself is a gendered category and the body is not a passive medium we are used to think of it as.

In the last pages of my thesis I will consider the 'act' of gender. Drawing from Butler I want to show how acts, gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of a interior and organizing gender core, and gender is a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. The act of gender is a repeated act and only through this act one becomes one's gender.

My aim with this paper is to show that if gender is created through sustained social performances, it means the very notion of essential sex, masculinity and femininity is also constructed. My aim is not to deconstruct the existing gender structures or to demolish traditional heterosexual gendered behaviour, in order for them to be replaced with others equally demanding gender notions, but to release gender from any bounds of natural

gender and out of it evolved heterosexuality for a more wider understanding of gender and sexuality, and to show that all genders are equal and, thus, should be accepted as such, both politically and socially.

I THE STRUCTURES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

In this chapter I will examine the reasons for which we are adopting an understanding of heterosexuality with its traditional conception of two genders with their traits as the norm, discarding all other possibilities as abnormal or even as psychopathology. I will start with Levi-Strauss and his ideas on the incest taboo, showing how it creates a situation in which women are being exchanged between tribes, families or clans, leaving them with less status.¹ Structuralism posits that discrete cultural elements are not explanatory in and of themselves, but rather form part of a meaningful system and are best understood with respect to their location within (and relationship to) the structure as a whole. In using structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss and out of it evoked structuralism I want to show how things we see as natural concerning our identities are the outcome of particular structures inside our culture.² Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology is a project that depicts people as they tend to think about the world in term of binary opposites. In the case of this paper understanding masculinity and femininity, and other opposite traits that derive from them, is where Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology is relevant.³

In addition to Levi Strauss I will also inspect Althusser's understanding of ideologies and how through ideology we come to accept the social (including gender) role pointed for us. I will introduce his conception on the ISA (ideological state apparatus) and show that ideology is not something we believe in, but rather something we are living out or portraying.⁴ I will then draw on Bourdieu and the conception of habitus, which is a set of socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life.⁵ Although Althusser makes a fair point with his ideologies, Bourdieu points out that any social structure does limit the individual, but does not define him conclusively, and the individual

¹ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987).

² Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987).

³ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987).

⁴ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

⁵ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

is able to exercise choices within the limits of any social structure or ideology.⁶

I will also draw on Foucault's human sexuality to display how the assumption that an accepted sexual behaviour must be reproductive has not been certified or justified but has been taken for granted.⁷ Foucault postulates a theory of sex discourses, which rely on confession. In creating a notion of repression, it allows power structures to conceptualize our sexuality, turning it into a discourse. There is no other, natural, free sexuality behind the discourses. Hence, our sexuality is always constructed.

1. Creating the Structures of Heterosexuality

1.1 Social Structures

In "Introduction to Marcel Mauss", Levi-Strauss starts out by introducing Mause's ideas on how the society leaves its imprints on the individual through training of the child's bodily needs and activities. This training goes unnoticed, telling us what we can do and what we cannot, by not only setting the norms (good, bad, just, unjust etc.) but also the playing field itself, which manifests the possible and the impossible, the real and the unreal, therefore reaching a much more ontological section of our thinking.⁸ He illustrates his theory with examples of how in different cultures people believe their bodies are capable of different things and later also with the example of psychopathologies, which in one culture can be just that but is some other something completely different.⁹

Man turns his body into a product of his techniques and his representations, but what are techniques or modes of representation in the first place or how we lodge them come from the social structure which dominates over us.¹⁰ We are never completely aware of this domination, since it runs so deep it influences the very thing we use to speculate over such things, we can also never be completely freed from the structures that dominate and also define us. To put it more simply: our brain is the tool for any contemplation, speculation, thinking etc, but since that tool is influenced by the social structure we can never see the

⁶ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990).

⁸ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p. 6-7.

⁹ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p.14-15.

¹⁰ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p. 8-9.

social structure for what it is, at least not completely. Clifford Geertz in “Masculine Domination”, claims that it is not through causal or natural means through what we enter roles of domination, but through social meanings our bodies carry, and which they have obtained only through social means.¹¹

The same thing applies to gender development. As Marcel Mauss puts it: “The physical training of all ages and both sexes is made up of masses of details which pass unnoticed; we must undertake to observe them.”¹² What we think a male body is capable or incapable of in contrast to the female body comes from the same social structures, but since we cannot see the social structure which surrounds us, we believe that the way we show of our bodies or how we are able to move with it is in direct contact to our biological nature and is in all ways natural for us.

Social life is a world of symbolic relationships. The society expresses itself symbolically through its customs and institutions, setting the modes of our behaviour. We can only express ourselves inside the framework of our culture, collectively. Individual behaviour on its own is never symbolic in itself.¹³

Clifford Geertz claims that ideology fills the emotional gap between things as they are and how one would have them be, thus insuring the performance of roles that otherwise might be abandoned. In other words, it glues to social group or class together by ideological means, obscuring the true nature of things.¹⁴ Quoting Taft-Hartley he says:

“Ideology tends to be simple and clear-cut, even where its simplicity and clarity do less than justice to the subject under discussion. [...] the ideology exaggerates and caricatures in the fashion of the cartoonist. In contrast, a scientific description of social phenomena is likely to be fuzzy and indistinct.”¹⁵

Ideology must categorize different performances under the same roof in order to survive, but individuals are never the same, therefore it is not natural for individual behaviour to exist under ideology. Geertz argues that every conscious perception of a subject is an act of recognition, a pairing in which an object (or an event, act, emotion) is defined by placing it

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 22-23.

¹² Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987) p. 4.

¹³ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p.12.

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 207.

¹⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 209.

against the background of an appropriate symbol.¹⁶ He says:

“Whatever their other differences, both so called cognitive and so called expressive symbols or symbol-systems have, then, at least one thing in common: they are extrinsic sources of information in terms of which human life can be patterned, extrapersonal mechanisms for the perception, understanding, judgment, and manipulation of the world. Culture patterns, religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological, are "programs"; they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide such a template for the organization of organic processes.”¹⁷

In order to give their claims more truth value, every theory draws links between the social and the physical, making it seem that its values are not simply an opinion or a preference but that they have a much higher ground to stand on.¹⁸ All this is required to have its subjects to stay within the framework of the society, obeying. This does not preclude all opposition against the norm of that society, since normal and abnormal are always complementary¹⁹, you cannot define one without the other and therefore the opposition actually confirms the norm and is itself also a part of the same social structure.

Geertz points out that ideology bridges the gap between things as they are and how one would have them be, thus insuring the performance of roles that could otherwise be abandoned. The power of ideology is, thus, to knit a social group or class together.²⁰ But, as Geertz stresses, ideologies remain hopelessly equivocal, and analysis on ideology remains crude, vacillatory and evasive. It is diagnostically convincing, functionally not. There is much talk about emotions “finding a symbolic outlet”, but not so much about how the trick is really done.²¹

“The link between the causes of ideology and its effects seems adventitious because the connecting element – the autonomous process of symbolic formulation – is passed over in virtual silence.”²²

It still remains, however, that ideologies represent the relationship between things as they are and how one would have them be and, thus, I feel, Geertz’s criticism of ideologies is definitely justified, but disposing of analysis on ideologies (which Geertz himself also does

¹⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 215.

¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 216.

¹⁸ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p. 16.

¹⁹ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p. 60-61.

²⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 205.

²¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 206-207.

²² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 207.

not necessitate) is not necessary or reasonable.

1.2 Ideologies

For Althusser ideology manipulates people to accept their role as exploited or exploiters.²³ But to widen this claim, ideology manipulates people to accept their role overall, that's to say their gender roles, which can of course also be seen as exploited or exploiters. Althusser, like a good Marxist, explains his theory with the division of superstructure and infrastructure (the economic base), and points out that upper structures (superstructure) could not be there without the lower ones (infrastructure, the economic base). Superstructure is made out of politico-legal state apparatus, which consists of police, court, prison etc and ideological state apparatus.²⁴ ISA is the religion, education, family, legal, political, trade-union, and communication. It is the cultural ISA. The plurality of the ISA is held together by the shared ideology of the ruling class. By plurality Althusser means the different modes of domination that hold people in their social place. Ideology, which is one of the modes of domination, is mostly found in the private domain, whereas repressive is found in the public. Repressive functions predominantly by violence, the ideological functions predominantly by ideology, but both use violence and ideology.²⁵

Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. While ideology is not reality, it still alludes to reality. Althusser claims then that it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. What ideology represents is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.²⁶

Although ideology represents imaginary relationships of individuals to their conditions, it is important not to underestimate its power and not to forget that for us, the ones *living* the ideology, it is real and not imaginary. Ideology has a material existence; it exists not

²³ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 167-168.

²⁴ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 141-146.

²⁵ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 143.

²⁶ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review press, 1971), p. 162-170.

spiritually inside us but materially.²⁷ Our practices are governed by rituals, through them ideology becomes materialized. It is the material existence of the ideological apparatus.²⁸

“ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief.”²⁹

Ideas of a human subject exist in our actions and for us, the ones performing the act; they are as real as real can be. For that reason we dress accordance to our role, speak and even think under ideology, it sets our existential grounds. Althusser also gives the example of religious ideology, where a subject believes in God, goes to church, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance and so on.³⁰ For that person it is not ideology that he practices, but his real relationship to his God and practices done in the name of his God would have serious consequences if remained undone. Same scenario goes for patriotism, where people, likewise, are acting out the ideology they live under.

Actions become practices and these practices are governed by rituals within the material existence of an ideological apparatus. There is no practice except by and in an ideology and there is no ideology except by subjects and for subjects. An individual is always already a subject.³¹ Even before a child is born he is already a subject, for his birth is already a ritual, and because what is already expected of the child, who is already gendered, and therefore expected behaviour and other modes of existence, are already decided for him and the training of the child's bodily needs has begun. To put it very simply: the first thing we ask when we have found out that someone is expecting a child is about the child's sex and after finding out this 'important' factor we immediately attach meanings to it and we act a certain way towards the child when he is born according to his gender. We can never escape ideology or see outside of it³², for the very reason that it has shaped us from the very beginning and we live our ideology, whether we want it or not we are always acting out our role.

²⁷ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 165.

²⁸ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 168.

²⁹ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 170.

³⁰ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 167.

³¹ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 175-176.

³² Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 128.

The concept of ideologies (or social structures of Levi-Strauss in that case), however, is never conclusive. Though we do live under ideology and practice what it preaches, it does not define us or our relationship with the world conclusively. In the next paragraph I will introduce the concept of habitus³³ and in Bourdieu's terms my aim is to show how though any structure limits us, it does not define us.

1.3 Habitus

The social world is only a representation of performance and practices are only an acting out or a role. For Bourdieu, however, this concept is not conclusive, and in introducing his concept of habitus, he wants to explain why. Habitus is the system of structured, structuring dispositions which are constituted in practice.³⁴ Or in other words habitus is the set of socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. The particular contents of the habitus are the result of the objectification of social structure at the level of individual subjectivity. Hence, the habitus is, by definition, isomorphic with the structural conditions in which it emerged.³⁵ For Bourdieu, by whom the term was re-elaborated, habitus depends on history.

Within habitus individuals are able to exercise choices inside the limits of the habitus (which is then dependent on history and human memory). Structure *limits* the individual.³⁶ But in saying that Bourdieu opens a window, when he doesn't claim that everything is pre-decided for us, but that individuals are able to exercise choices within the limits of a specific structure, then there individuals are able to make free choices and to manipulate the system in their advantage. This is an important claim, because it means that whatever the social structures (or ideologies for Althusser) that surround us are, they don't have to be final and can be changed, and also, as we have seen throughout history, have been changed. Again, our reality is defined by those structures, but not fundamentally and terminally, which leaves the possibility of change.

Or as Butler would put it: "I am not outside of the language that structures me, but neither am I determined by the language that makes this "I" possible."³⁷ I am never spared from

³³ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 52.

³⁴ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 52.

³⁵ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 53.

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. xxvi.

the social structures that surround me, but I am also not determined by them. I am free to act inside those structures and to execute free choices.

Structure can have specific familial manifestations, for example division of labour between the sexes, household objects, and modes of consumption and parent-child relations.³⁸

Habitus, a product of history, is built upon past experiences and gives disproportionate weight to experiences unlike scientific experiments. It guarantees the 'correctness' of our practices and their constancy over time, leaning on as already said on past experiences. It is the internalization of externality.³⁹ Judith Butler, though not using the term habitus, makes a similar point:

“The very attribution of femininity to female bodies as if it were a natural or necessary property takes place within a normative framework in which the assignment of femininity to femaleness is one mechanism for the production of gender itself. Terms such as “masculine” and “feminine” are notoriously changeable; there are social histories for each term; their meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining who, and for what purpose.”⁴⁰

Habitus makes possible the production of all thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production and only those, within the constraints of the structure. It has infinite yet strictly limited generative capacity; limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production. A degree of invention is possible in the habitus, but it is limited. Extreme behaviour however will be sanctioned, and thereby the habitus and its regularities survive. It is embodied history in each and every person which makes the individual an agent of its world, and it gives the practices their autonomy.⁴¹

It is a wider notion of what Levi Strauss with his social structures and Althusser with his ideologies are talking about, but nevertheless makes a similar claim, which is that our behaviour and perception are governed by social structures, histories, memories and other culturally developed discourses inside our society, which does not only set the norms, but *is* the playing field which then manifests also the modes of our existence, the possible, impossible etc.

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 54.

³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 45.

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 10.

⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 56-57.

There are different modes of domination and different kinds of capital. Domination can reach us from written texts, which go beyond our own memory or through education system. Symbolic capital plays an important part in producing relations of dependence that have an economic basis but are disguised under a veil of moral relations. Like Marcel Mauss, so does Bourdieu claim that gifts and debts are the same for they both make you dependent, because you have to somehow repay for the gift or the debt. The only difference is that the former is a moral obligation and the latter is an economic obligation, the former is masked violence and the latter is obvious violence. The mixture of both is what serves best the goal of dominating other people.⁴² Ideas are weapons and an excellent way to institutionalize a particular view of reality; to capture political power and enforce it.⁴³

It is not because of our bodies, our biology, through which we enter these modes of domination, but through social meanings that our bodies carry, and which they have obtained only through social means. As Bourdieu claims:

“it is not the phallus (or its absence) which is the basis of that worldview, rather it is that worldview which, being organized according to the division into *relational gender*, male and female, can institute the phallus, constituted as the symbol of virility, of the specifically male point of honour (*nif*), and the difference between biological bodies as objective foundations of the difference between the sexes.”⁴⁴

These modes of domination regulate the social and political order, excluding women from more noble tasks, assigning them menial and drudging tasks.⁴⁵ Though women have come to obtain more and more traditionally male-directed statuses and jobs, the understanding of such division in our minds seems to remain, and men are still trusted more with noble and authoritative positions. Still however, this change excellently demonstrates the possibility of change in the habitus, but still maintains the basic concept of structures.

1.4 The Incest Taboo

In introducing the concept of the incest taboo, my aim is to further explain the modes of domination discussed in the previous chapter. In using Levi-Strauss and Freud, my goal is

⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 126.

⁴³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 202.

⁴⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 22-23.

⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 24.

to show how it creates social relationships and modes of domination in which women are being exchanged between tribes, leaving them with lesser ground in comparison with men.

1.4.1 Levi Strauss on the Incest Taboo

The social structure does not only dictate who we are, but also who we are in relation to other subjects and what kind of relationships are possible, impossible, accepted or taboo. Levi Strauss explains relationships between subjects with a simple formula by the example of marriage bonds in Polynesia which ultimately can be decomposed into four cycles of reciprocity between the lineages A and B, A and C, A and D, A and E.

“The total operation expresses a certain type of social structure such that, for example, there are no cycles allowed between B and C, whereas a different form of society would give these cycles pride in place. The method is so strictly applicable that, if an error appeared in the solution to the equations obtained from it, it would be more likely to be imputable to a gap in knowledge about the indigenous institutions than to a miscalculation.”⁴⁶

Replacing the 'no cycles allowed between B and C' with the incest taboo, which prohibits practices of sexual relationships between relatives, we have a situation where men and women inside one tribe are not allowed to have sexual relationships, which in turn creates the exchange of women between different tribes. The exchange of women is a symbolic relationship between the tribes, where the woman plays the role of a gift, which according to Marcel Mauss stands for every aspect of the society it is part of. The gift is economic, political, kinship-oriented, legal, mythological, religious, magical, practical, personal and social.⁴⁷ By moving such an object through the social landscape, the gift-giver so to speak rearranges the fabric of sociality and is so doing forms the basis of the gifts power.

The gift bonds men from different tribes together, as Levi-Strauss suggests it creates homoerotic bonds between men: “Exchange – and consequently the rule of exogamy – is not simply that of goods exchanged. Exchange – and consequently the rule of exogamy that expresses it – has in itself a social value. It provides the means of binding men together.”⁴⁸ The same economy of kinships prohibits endogamy.

This exchange leaves women with no power nor status, since in opposition to men from

⁴⁶ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p. 40.

⁴⁷ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, (London:Routledge, 1987), p. 45-47.

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 55.

either tribe who have developed relationships to one another and established a position inside their tribe, women have to leave their home tribe for the new tribe where they are firstly connected to their husbands and not to other women and where they have no other connections and therefore no power. This is important not because women should establish, in between themselves, a new order of things, but because the distinction between men and women is made in the first place and with that first distinction we are creating more and more differences between the two genders, unknowingly actually creating the gender discourse which then has taken the place of a natural gender identity for us. And in so doing, we are leaving one gender with the inability to stand up against the other by creating the different circumstances for them which we justify by pointing out the differences between the two genders, forgetting that we have created those differences ourselves.

Examples start from the very beginning, when a child is born and he is given his gender and raised according to it (boys wear blue, girl pink, boys have more active games, and girls are expected to be more gentle and refined). It continues with basically all our social interactions in adulthood, for example with dating, where men brings the women flowers, or in social caterings where men pour wine and not women, or when people say it is so much more disturbing (or disturbing in the first place) when a women smokes cigarettes or curses and not when a man does these things. Or the assumption that women are better parents than men, when in reality, we ourselves have taught our daughters better than our sons in that matter.

Butler in her “Undoing Gender” also explains Levi-Strauss's ways about the incest taboo: “Levi Strauss makes clear in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* that nothing in biology necessitates the incest taboo, that it is a purely cultural phenomenon. By “cultural” Levi-Strauss does not mean “culturally variable” or “contingent”, but rather according to “universal” laws of culture.”

And also: “In Lacan, the symbolic becomes defined in terms of a conception of linguistic structures that are irreducible to the social forms that language takes. According to structuralist terms, it establishes the universal conditions under which the society, that it, communicability of all language use, becomes possible. This move paves the way for the consequential distinction between symbolic and social accounts of kinship.”⁴⁹

The symbolic is the law, surviving any and every contestation of its authority, because

⁴⁹ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 44-45.

being the law we are made to think in advance that our efforts to change it would not have the hoped result, and then we, without even trying to change it, will submit to the authority.

For Levi-Strauss it is the position of a man and a woman what makes possible particular forms of sexual exchange. There gender operates to secure certain forms of reproductive relations; the heterosexual ties, and prohibits other sexualities or gender notions. “One's gender, in this view, is an index of the proscribed and prescribed sexual relations by which a subject is socially regulated and produced.”⁵⁰ Levi-Strauss argues that the incest taboo is in effect a prohibition against endogamy, in order to produce exogamous ties. Through exchange of women between different social groups, unrelated tribes or households will form ties by marriage, which otherwise would be absent. Or as Marcel Mauss would put it:

“that exchange in primitive societies consists not so much in economic transactions as in reciprocal gifts, that these reciprocal gifts have a far more important function than in our own, and that this primitive form of exchange is not merely nor essentially of an economic nature but is what he aptly calls 'a total social fact', that is, an event which has a significance that is at once social and religious, magic and economic, utilitarian and sentimental, jural and moral.”⁵¹

The incest taboo leads to artificial accomplishment of a nonincestuous heterosexuality extracted through prohibition from a more natural and unconstrained sexuality. Denying any sexual relationships between blood relatives, it also has a hidden agenda, which is a prohibition against homosexuality. These two prohibitions create the illusion of a consensual and natural heterosexuality, which leads to exclusion of any other sexual practices. For Levi-Strauss there is a universal structure of regulating exchange which is true for all kinships. This however seems to be too naïve to assume.

Incest taboo is shown as a universal cultural truth, thereby, heterosexuality is naturalized as well as masculine sexual agency. They are discursive constructions nowhere accounted for but everywhere assumed. I can see no reason why incest taboo can only create heterosexual relationships between subjects, since the prohibition is against sexual relationships between (blood) relatives. Heterosexuality is being assumed. “The naturalization of both heterosexuality and masculine sexual agency are discursive constructions nowhere accounted but everywhere assumed within the founding structuralist frame.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 47-48.

⁵¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* revised edition, trans. James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 52.

⁵² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 58.

1.4.2 Freud on the Incest Taboo

Freud created the idea of the Oedipus complex, which states that a boy has sexual desire toward his mother and, thus, feels threatened by the father with whom he competes for maternal attention. The opposite, the attraction of a girl to her father and rivalry with her mother, is sometimes called the Electra complex.

At some point child realizes (psychologist today date that around the ages 2-3⁵³) that there is a difference between their mom and dad, and that they themselves are more alike to one than the other. Thus the child acquires the concept of gender. The Oedipus complex occurs in the third — phallic stage (ages 3–6) — of five psychosexual development stages: oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital, which differ by the erogenous zone of libido pleasure.

According to Freud the child feels sexual desire toward the parents of the opposite sex, but the incest taboo weights heavy on his shoulders, permitting him any such relations with that parent. The boy, attracted to his mother and aware of the incest taboo, fears that his father will find out about his desires and thus tries to be liked by the male parent, which includes mimicking him. While in truth he wishes to sleep with his mother and kill his father, the social prohibition in the shape of the incest taboo is stronger and the boy will direct his desire toward other females and forget that he had ever lusted for his mother. The girls experience the Electra complex the similar way, only the parents roles have been swapped.⁵⁴

The successful resolution of either complex is heterosexuality in developing a mature sexual role and identity. An unsuccessful resolution, according to Freud, would lead to neurosis, pedophilia or homosexuality.

In her interoperation of Lacan, Butler claims that the masculine “subject” is never a fictive construction produced by the law that prohibits incest and forces an infinite displacement of a heterosexualizing desire, the feminine is a differentiating linguistic rules that effectively create sexual difference. “The masculine linguistic position undergoes individuation and heterosexualization required by the founding prohibition of the Symbolic law, the law of the Father.”⁵⁵ In incest taboo the law is enacted “in the name of the Father”.

⁵³ Hodges, Menon, et al. 'The Intrapsychics of Gender: A Model of Self-Socialization', in: *Psychological Review*, (American Psychological Association, 2010), lk. 601.

⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, *New Intriductory Lectures on Phychoanalysis*, trans. James Strackey, (London: Penguin Books, 1973).

⁵⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 38.

The law that refuses girl's desire for both the mother and the father requires that she take up the emblem of maternity and perpetuate the rules of kinship. Hence, both masculine and feminine positions and are thus institutes through prohibition.

But it is not the incest taboo alone that restricts the child from certain sexual relationships and desires. It is also homosexuality in contrast to heterosexuality which is being denied, in most cases heterosexuality is being assumed as the norm and this assumption is not even explained and justified. Butler, on Freud's concept of melancholia, however says this:

“In the case of a prohibited heterosexual union, it is the object which is denied, but not the modality of desire, so that the desire is deflected from that object onto other objects of the opposite sex. But in the case of a prohibited homosexual union, it is clear that both the desire and the object require renunciation and so become subjects to the internalizing strategies of melancholia. Hence, “the young boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him”⁵⁶.

Butler does however point out that even though Freud postulated children as bisexuals, meaning the boy must have felt at some point sexual love towards his father, Freud seems to forget that and deny that original sexual love.⁵⁷ Butler continues by pointing out that even though it is through the Oedipus complex, which results in the boy identifying with the father and choosing of the heterosexual desire, it is more probable (and Freud seems to indicate that) that it is the primary bisexuality and the homosexual cathexis that must be subordinated to the culturally sanctioned heterosexuality, in the fear of feminization.⁵⁸

Butler suggests however that Freud's bisexuality is not how we might think of bisexuality, but rather it is the coincidence of two heterosexual desires within a single psyche.⁵⁹ The child has a masculine and a feminine side, the masculine side is always sexually oriented toward the mother and feminine towards father. Later the boy will reject his feminine side and the girl her masculine, resulting in “normal” gender identities and through that also in normal heterosexuality. Thus, heterosexuality and its connection with gender identity is still being assumed, since the child can never be said to be truly homosexual.

Gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition. The resolution of Freud's Oedipal complex is not only the taboo against incest, but also a taboo against homosexuality. These prohibitions sanction

⁵⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 79-80.

⁵⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 80.

⁵⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 80-81.

⁵⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 82.

and regulate discrete gender identity and the law for heterosexual desire. As Gayle Rubin writes:

“the incest taboo presupposes a prior, less articulate taboo on homosexuality. A prohibition against *some* heterosexual unions assumes a taboo against *non*heterosexual unions. Gender is not only an identification with one sex; it also entails that sexual desire be directed towards the other sex. The sexual division of labor is implicated in both aspects of gender – male and female it creates them, and it creates them heterosexual.”⁶⁰

It also seems to follow that the taboo against homosexuality precedes the heterosexual incest taboo, the taboo against homosexuality creates the heterosexual dispositions by which the Oedipal complex becomes possible. Hence, what Freud assumes⁶¹ to be sexual facts are in fact the law, which when internalized produces and regulates discrete gender identity and heterosexual desire.⁶²

2. The Heterosexual Discourse

2.1 History of Sexuality

Why is our sexuality so important? Why are we concerned about someone else's sexual practices and desires? Why are we concerned about our own? Foucault in his “History of Sexuality” was the first to point out how sex is being turned into a discourse. In his work he sets out by describing how we today like to believe we are freeing sexuality from its bounds that previous century has put on it and in doing so we feel the need to talk about sex all the time, are willing even to pay money for a professional to listen to us talk about our sexuality, how we take pride in our such actions and how sex now has a political cause, where in speaking about our sexuality we are standing up against the power, freeing it from its bounds for a more blissful future .⁶³ We are set out to reveal the truth about sex, modify its economy within reality, subvert the law that govern it and change it.⁶⁴ It's as if sexuality is the central part of our identities and that only through freeing our sexuality can we really reach our true nature.

⁶⁰ Gayle Rubin, *The Traffic in Women: Notes Towards a Political Economy of Sex*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 180.

⁶¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Super-Ego (Ego-Ideal)*, trans. Joan Riviera, (New York: Norton, 1960).

⁶² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 85-87.

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 6-7.

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 8.

Adopting Foucault's ideas and looking at the world today, he is probably not far off. Sex today is in almost every media channel, being sexy has replaced aspirations like being beautiful or other aspired traits by the new generation, the magazines we read teach us how to best to lap dance a man to orgasm or what are the 10 best places to have sex, pornography, *Girls Gone Wild* etc are a regular part of our everyday lives. Nobody is surprised probably by anything we might find in them and modes of behaviour we adopt from them are taken in with pride and those who reject them are stamped as abnormal, boring or rigid. Like in discussed in the previous chapter on the example of Levi-Strauss, we are taking in to the current social structure, making it part of our identities, in Foucault's terms, we are transforming our desire, our sexuality into a discourse.

Although all this seems to be true, at least for the part that we are living this new found freedom, Foucault continues with asking if sex really has been repressed during previous centuries and is the power really working towards repression. And maybe most importantly who is doing the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompts people to speak about it and how are the things said, stored and distributed. In a shorter sentence: the ways in which sex is put into a discourse.⁶⁵

Foucault doesn't want to deny that sex has been controlled, but to question the ways of how it was done and also our belief that we are now in our way to have our sex freed or fixed. He asks us to think if our new discourse is not new at all, but a continuation of the old one, the one we are trying so hard to leave behind. He argues that throughout human history there have always been attempts to control sex for a more stable community. In the 17. century (in Foucault's research the century from which we are trying to free our natural desires) we were also expected to confess our sex in explicit detail.⁶⁶

“The Christian pastoral prescribed as a fundamental duty the task of passing everything having to do with sex through the endless mill of speech. The forbidding of certain words, the decency of expression, all the censoring of the vocabulary, might well have been only secondary devices compared to that great subjugation: ways of rendering it morally acceptable and technically useful.”⁶⁷

And also:

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 10-11.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 20.

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 21.

“Western man has been drawn for three centuries to telling everything concerning his sex; that since the classical age he has been a constant optimization and an increasing valorization of the discourse on sex; and that this carefully analytical discourse was meant to yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire itself.”⁶⁸

During the 18. century sex evolved into a police matter, it had to be taken into account, not only morally, like it had been done before, but also rationally. The term 'people' and 'subjects' were replaced by 'population', which became more and more an urgent matter. As population as a resource of labour was acknowledged it became more important to analyze and control birth rate, the age of marriage, legitimate and illegitimate births etc.⁶⁹ It was the first century where the manner in which one made use of one's sex became important.

Since then discourses surrounding sex have only widened. Sex has taken the lead of discursive existence, compelling us to turn our sexuality into a perpetual discourse, which is governed by economy, pedagogy, medicine and justice. What distinguishes previous centuries from today is not the absence of sex discourse from them, but the wide amount of dispersions of devices that have been invented from the sex discourse today.⁷⁰

Foucault ideas on the repression of sex are therefore that the repression itself is actually in the service of confession, in which we think we bring our hidden sex into open. “The postulate that “sex is repressed” is actually in the service of a plan that would have you disclose sex.”⁷¹ Foucault's conclusion is that the only reason we say that sex is repressed is so that we can force it open, so that we can 'confess' it.

2.2 The Sex Discourse

Foucault calls his new power over life, where 'population' has replaced people or subjects, 'bio-power', which takes two main forms: the discipline of the body, where the human body is treated as a machine, and the regulation of population, where focus is on the reproductive capacity of the human body. The latter includes demography, wealth analysis and ideology and seeks to control population on a statistical level. Foucault also sees bio-power as the main reason for the rise of capitalism, where our life became something to be

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 23.

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 25.

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 34.

⁷¹ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 162.

understood, regulated and control and law something that sets the norm and not so much interested in forbidding and controlling.⁷² Sex was related to biological functions and anatomo-psychological machinery that gave it its “meaning”, its finality as Foucault puts it.⁷³

“the notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified.”⁷⁴

This construct of sex is in the service of the social regulation, produced to control our sexuality; it conceals and artificially unifies unrelated sexual functions, and acts as a cause inside the sex discourse, when it is rather an effect than an origin. He proposes sexuality as an open and complex historical system of discourse and power, which produces “sex” as a part of a strategy to conceal and thus, perpetuate power relations.

Through this notion it became that some of the contents of biology and psychology were able to act as a principle of normality for human sexuality. That is for heterosexuality, where from anatomical sex recalls an artificial continuous covey for a fitting biological function, reproductive capacity, gender and pleasure where derived, making it the norm for all human sexuality. In Butler’s interpretation:

“To be sexed, for Foucault, is to be subjected to a set of social regulations, to have the law that directs those regulations reside both as the formative principle of one's sex, gender, pleasures, and desires and as the hermeneutic principle of self-interpretation. The category of sex is thus inevitably regulative, and any analysis which makes the category presuppositional uncritically extends and further legitimates that regulative strategy as a power/knowledge regime.”⁷⁵

Geertz in “Ideology as a Cultural System” notes that human personality in itself is always conflicting and it is the social structures that organize it to a more linear system: “this fiction or social strain appears on the level of the individual personality – itself an inevitably malintegrated system of conflicting desires, archaic sentiments, and improvised defences – as psychological strain.”⁷⁶

⁷² Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 153.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1990), p. 154.

⁷⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 130.

⁷⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 204.

The sex discourse sets the norms of gender, sex, sexual desires and activities, by not only as an external social regulation or structure, but through the social domination it also becomes internalized, as we consider 'our' gender ours, not because we acknowledge social structures surrounding us, but because we are so consumed with our gender role, that we don't notice we are acting out a role at all.

Although with this Foucault makes an important claim for the feminist and queer moments, as Butler points out, he does seem to make an error. On one hand Foucault wants to argue that there is no 'sex' prior to or outside of the sex discourse, but with his introduction to 'Herculine Barbin' he seems to think that there is a 'multiplication of pleasure' in itself, prior to any social structure or discourse, where in other texts he claims that sexuality is always situated in the matrixes of power, constructed within a specific historical practice and that any pre-discursive sexuality is an illusion.⁷⁷ As she puts it: "Foucault appears to think that the journals provide insight into precisely that unregulated field of pleasures prior to the imposition of the law of univocal sex. His reading, however, constitutes a radical misreading of the way in which those pleasures are always already embedded in the pervasive but inarticulate law and, indeed, generated⁷⁸ by the very law they are said to defy."

And also: "Whether "before" the law as a multiplicitous sexuality or "outside" the law as an unnatural transgression, those positionings are invariably "inside" a discourse which produces sexuality and then conceals that production through a configuring of a courageous and rebellious sexuality "outside" of the text itself".⁷⁹ As Levi-Strauss would put it, the social norm does not preclude its opposition, it needs it, since normal and abnormal are always complementary, you cannot define one without the other, so the "rebellious sexuality" exists inside the sex discourse and helps produce the norm. Or in other words, the law which prohibits nonheterosexual acts and desires is the same law that invents and invites it. They are inseparable.

2.3 Importance of Reproduction

The discourse we have in our society therefore tells us that only heterosexual couples can make for a normal and capable kinship, and any other kind does not work or does not count

⁷⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 131.

⁷⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 133.

⁷⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 134.

as one. Several arguments are brought to support this claim and one is, as briefly already mentioned, that sexuality has to be in the service of reproductive relations. In our society there is also a claim for monogamy, where both parents, with their different gender roles, are present, would add to the bunch. This however doesn't seem to follow through, since there are many examples of working kinships, that do not convey to the monogamous heterosexual matrix. Examples vary: from gay or lesbian couples to polygamous relationships found in Africa. What they all have in common, is that they all show that there are more than one way for a successful and able kinship.

Time Science study at children raised by lesbians from birth to adolescence, showed that not only there were no negative effects in comparison to heterosexual parent(s), but these children might even be better off. Children raised by lesbian mothers — whether the mother was partnered or single — scored very similarly to children raised by heterosexual parents on measures of development and social behavior. But children in lesbian homes scored higher than kids in straight families on some psychological measures of self-esteem and confidence, did better academically and were less likely to have behavioral problems, such as rule-breaking and aggression.⁸⁰

Not surprising, however, that 41 percent of children faced some teasing, ostracism or discrimination related to their same-sex parents. But by the age of seventeen, the feelings of distress over that, had dissipated.⁸¹ Thus, for the question of what will happen to a child in such a family, there seems to be some ground, but only inside the same heterosexual discourse, which creates hate towards other sexual practices and gender notions, and therefore is creating the problem with children grown up outside heterosexual monogamous couple. The problem does not exist prior to the claim for heterosexuality and outside of it.

There are many reasons for this state apparatus, but one as Judith Butler points out can be that, since nowadays the state has become more and more alienated and distant from the people it is meant to represent, that it needs to rely on its sacredness and inviolability of its own laws.⁸² Although this seems true, that does not mean that the state never had to rely on its laws before or never intervened with its people lives, even on the level of their sexual

⁸⁰ Alice Park, 'Study: Children with Lesbians May Do Better Than Their Peers', <<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1994480,00.html>> [01.05.2012].

⁸¹ Alice Park, 'Study: Children with Lesbians May Do Better Than Their Peers', <<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1994480,00.html>> [01.05.2012].

⁸² Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 117.

life (as Foucault clearly showed), but rather that since the communities which it now governs have grown bigger, less and less people are involved in the law making, which makes it for the state more vital to represent their laws as sacred and inviolable, in order for the state apparatus to survive. Althusser also demonstrated it with his ideologies, which ultimately determine the willingness to obey to the state.

The reproductive capacity seems to be one of the main arguments against other sexual practices besides heterosexuality and against gender differences within the heterosexual discourse itself. Since only a heterosexual couple is reproductive and reproduction is vital in terms of human species survival, it follows that therefore any other sexual practices must be false. Evolutionary theory which is generally defined as changes in trait or gene frequency in a population of organisms from one generation to the next, for Charles Darwin by the means of natural selection. It logically follows that for the human species to survive it is vital for there to be reproductive heterosexual practices.

But it is not obvious that any other sexual practices are therefore unnatural or forbidden. As humans there are so many other variables that influence our life, not necessarily consciously for as I've showed by the example of Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Bourdieu and Foucault, but variable for whatever reason are important to us as humans and in whatever way shape our lives and who we are as people or subjects. Other than reproductiveness, it is also obvious that sexual desire, sensations and pleasures play a very important part in our sexuality. Our sexual preferences are individually different, there are probably no two identical sexual preferences, meanings that not only do they differ in large categories like hetero- and homosexuality, but also inside these categories, where every individual has his own personal sexuality.

This sexuality is greatly influenced by a large amount of social structures and discourses which all live inside the same habitus, but since there are so many different discourses on sexuality, which in turn are influenced by other social factors, it is impossible to assume that people pick up the same structures and feel comfortable inside the same social norms. That does not mean that the picking would be completely random. Stronger structures, for example the one's considered as the norm, have a bigger affect on the people and making them therefore also a more frequent means of sexual behaviour. This can appear both "naturally", meaning the subject believes his sexuality has a natural cause that "lives" within him, but also by the means in which a subject who's "natural" sexuality is not compatible with the norm and who therefore seeks to change his sexuality.

Coming back to the beginning of this chapter, our sexuality is always a discourse, it has no pre-discursive existence, all its variables are culturally generated, by not only different discourses on sexuality that exist in a society, but also by other social structures whose direct impact is not on our sexuality but on some other variable that shapes us as people and through that also influences our sexuality. Although evolution theory and other institutions that emphasize the importance of reproduction and rightfully so, reproduction does not demand, on the basis of human species survival, that all humans should be reproductive or that all sexual intercourse should be that. If that would be the case, then all birth control should also be a taboo. There is no reason to assume that homosexuals are less satisfied with their sexual life than heterosexuals, and also no reason to assume that some couples or some people according to their sexual preferences or gender identity are better parents than others.

We are, above all, all individual subjects with individual needs and desires, knowledge and know-how, our sexuality and gender notion is a part of our identities, but does not alone determine us in any way. Butler in critical inquiry of Foucault states again that Foucault in genealogical critique refuses to search for the origin of gender, some inner truth for desire or an authentic sexual identity that repression has kept from our sight, but rather it investigates the political stakes that postulate as an origin and cause, categories that are in fact the effect of those institutions, practices and discourses. “The task of this inquiry is to center on – and decenter – such defining institutions: phallogentrism and compulsory⁸³ heterosexuality.”

2.4 Heterosexuality as a Univocal Norm

One's claim to 'to be a man' or to 'be a woman' tends to subordinate the notion of gender under identity and leads to the conclusion that one *is* one's gender and that this gender is in virtue with one's sexuality. “In such a prefeminist context, gender, naively (rather than critically) confused with sex, serves as a unifying principle of the embodied self and maintains that unity over and against an “opposite sex” whose structure is presumed to maintain a parallel but oppositional internal coherence among sex, gender, and desire.”⁸⁴ Hence to feel 'like a woman' means to be something other than the other gender.

“Gender can denote a unity of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be

⁸³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. xxxi.

⁸⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 30.

understood in some sense to necessitate gender.”⁸⁵ The internal unity of either gender requires both a stable and oppositional, where one differentiates itself through an oppositional relationship to the other gender it desires, heterosexuality. That institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces univocal genders, meaning it presupposes not only the causal relationships between sex, gender and desire, but also that desire reflects gender and vice versa.

“This rough sketch gives us a clue to understanding the political reasoning for the substantializing view of gender. The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire.”⁸⁶

We only become intelligible as persons through becoming gendered and we become gendered through the differentiation of the other gender. Intelligible genders are those which in some sense maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, which in reality means first of all that one is heterosexual, and if born with male anatomy also has male sex and male gender, and desire towards females. Cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot “exist”; that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not “follow” from either sex or gender.

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. Gender is always an act, substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence.

⁸⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 30.

⁸⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 31.

II THE 'ACT' OF GENDER

1. The Parenting

In the previous chapter I concentrated on social structures that make possible the forming of our gender identities and sexuality in a more general sense, by which I mean on the social structures themselves, but not on specific characters of those structures that are connected to our gender forming. In this paragraph I will continue with specific gender related activities that influence our gender development, starting with Ann Oakley and her perspective of a child's parenting, a period where the 'act' of gender begins.

For Oakley 'sex' is a biological term and 'gender' a psychological and cultural one. 'Sex' consists of chromosomes, genitalia and hormones, whereas 'gender' consists of psychological and cultural attributes, and the amount of masculinity in contrast to femininity in one person. Meaning, whether a person has a male or female gender is determined by the amount of femininity or masculinity in that person and this amount is not naturally connected to the person's 'sex', which means that one's sex does not refer to one's gender. She also points out that between different cultures there isn't a consensus on what attributes belong to a male or female gender, meaning that what we think of as male or female is constructed inside our culture, and may have other meanings in some other society. But how do we come to obtain these meanings?

Parental upbringing influences child's understanding of its gender, even if a boy has no penis, he can become a man. It is because children do not use anatomy to decide whether they or someone else is a boy or a girl, but rather refer to dress, behaviour, haircuts etc in deciding on that. Gender is visible, sex is not.⁸⁷ Penis and vagina are only the symbols of gender, it is not the possession of the sexual genitals that dictates what gender someone is, but how they feel their gender. A biological woman can have a male identity and feel like she has a penis and that penis becomes the symbol for her masculinity.⁸⁸ If your family brings you up as a woman, it does not matter what biological sex you are, you are treated like a woman and you behave like one, even if you are biologically male, you will have a

⁸⁷ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p. 161.

⁸⁸ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p. 162.

feminine identity. Although children do not decide on gender on actual biological properties, children whose biological bodies are not linear with their gender identity will probably experience distress over these matters when they are grownups, because society expects this linearity.

Gender identities are established in early childhood and they are not reversible.⁸⁹ Biological sex can be reconstructed to fit the gender identity, but not the other way around, how it is usually thought of. The example of a woman who feels like she does have a penis is a great example for that. Oakley also claims that sexual orientation depends on the gender identity and not biological anatomy⁹⁰, but my claim will be that all three of the factors are separate, but I will get into that later on. Although gender identity and sexual orientation can have a “linear” line, for example a male transsexual who feels that she is a woman and also a heterosexual when her sexual desire is directed towards males, it does not mean it is always so and that her sexuality is what it is because of her gender identity.

The learning of gender roles starts the moment a child is born, the baby is already been given a sexuality and a corresponding gender. As I have shown drawing on Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Bourdieu and Foucault, these social structures and social norms are already here when we are born and in that sense we are always already gendered even before the act of birth. We are already thought of, of some ways according to our sex determined gender. Butler argues that the moment an infant becomes humanized is the moment when the question “is it a boy or a girl?” is answered, meaning all who fall outside of those categories are not considered humans at all.

Research has also shown that mothers do treat their babies differently according to their sex, for example mothers hold little boys longer than girls, but with time they give them greater independence and at the same time they respond to daughters imitation more and in doing so are actually reinforcing different behaviour between their sons and daughters. If asked about it they usually say that they see their behaviour towards their kids as normal, since boys are boys and should be treated as such and girls are girls and therefore should be treated as girls.⁹¹ So what they see is that they are raising and treating their child as it ought to be raised in accordance to their gender and not that it is their treatment of the child that is manifesting the gender differences in the first place. But is it really so?

⁸⁹ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p. 164.

⁹⁰ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

⁹¹ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

According to Oakley children pick up their gender role not verbally or disciplinarily but kinaesthetically, which consists of four processes: manipulation (deal with girls hair and dress and tell her how cute she is, the little girl will incorporate the mothers view of herself as feminine), canalization (direct attention of boys and girls to different objects, like sex-differentiated toys, and rewarding them when they take to them), verbal appellation (often unnoticed “you are a naughty boy”, “be a good girl”) and activity exposure (gender activities such as a boy has to pee while standing, mothers mostly do not even recognize that they treat their daughters and sons differently and when they do recognize it they think they react to sex-determined temperament of their child).⁹² Although time has passed since Oakley wrote her text, I find it still useful, since my aim in this paper is not so much to examine the psychological or social research (as it is not a paper on social studies), but to understand and ask about gender identity.

The child learns his gender role unconsciously, not knowing about the intentions or contents of what it learns. Gender roles are acquired because the child identifies with the parent, this does not happen mechanically. It is an imitation which is a reproduction of behaviour and attitudes which the child sees around himself and knows is expected of him.

We can distinguish between two types of learning processes. First is called the social learning view, in which the child’s thinking process is something like this: “I want rewards, I am rewarded for doing boy things, therefore I want to be a boy.” And secondly the cognitive learning view in which it is something like: “I am a boy, to do boy things is rewarding”. It is not possible yet to determine which comes first, the realization that one is a boy and therefore does boyish things or the other way around.

What Oakley is comfortable to say is that Freud’s reasoning that the Oedipus complex determines the gender identification of the child is wrong, because the child knows its gender before the Oedipus complex sets in. Rather the family structure determines the gender identification when the boy understands he is treated different to his sister. Of course it is not only the parents who influence child's gender development, but the society overall in which the child operates. Even when his parents would try to raise their child gender neutral, the child will still pick up gender oriented attributes due to his connection with the larger society and norms and structures that derive from it. The wider environment supports the idea of gender roles.

⁹² Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

Over the years children will internalize their gender roles and gender becomes an internal part of their identities, posing as natural. This is only one mechanism by which the sex differentiation is maintained in society. For the children and also adult that deviate from their appointed gender role there are sanctions applied (like social ridicule or even law).⁹³ But what is important to take from here is that gender has no biological origin and connections between sex and gender are not natural, but constructed over time, already starting before we are born, and continued with the internalization of gender roles, which we continue to act out in every day basis, eventually taking them as natural part of ourselves and reject any gender identities that fall outside of our social norms.

It is a two way street. On one side social structures and norms inside our society set the boundaries and norms which we are expected to follow and do follow for the most part, sometimes even not thinking that there could be any other possibilities, and on the other side is us, the one's always preserving those same social norms and boundaries, sometimes with some changes, but for the most part the same.

How we see men and women (that includes ourselves) has changed over time a lot and will continue to change, but what has not changed over all this time is how we tie different personality traits, characteristics, ability, emotions and much more with either male or female gender, when they do not derive from our biological bodies and are always culturally constructed and taught to us. All social, cultural and psychological differences that exist between male and female gender are there because we have been learning different traits, emotions and ability. That is, they are very much real, but in a sense that we have obtained those modes of behaviour through practice and learning, not because of some intrinsic propensity, and that means those modes of behaviour and thought are capable of change and should be let to change if there is a willing agent.

2. The Category of Women

For the most part feminist thought has assumed that there is a category of women, some exciting identity that needs to be pointed out, politically represented and explained (for example through new language, which is no more phallogocentric, but a language that would represent woman's thought and point of view). This assumption, made by famous feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, has over time proven problematic. First it is very difficult, if not say impossible, to find that identity which could represent all women.

⁹³ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

Already inside one society we encounter variety of different women, but even when we are able to find some unifying trait in them, finding something of that sort for all the women of the world, that is women from completely different social backgrounds, just seems to be impossible. 'Women' is not a simple black-and-white concept, it is troublesome concept since gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities and therefore cannot be brought under the same term.

Secondly, the assumption that there is an exciting identity prior to any social regulation seems to create the situational feminist thinkers are trying to solve. When we assume there is some identity which combines all women together, distinct from all males, we are already saying that there are more than biological differences between those genders, and from there on other distancing traits are not hard to follow.

In feminist thought there have been speculations about the times before the patriarchal law, which would then provide some imaginary speculation on women's position before such law, that it before oppression. Although this was done to prove that there are no causal reasoning for male ruling, many other conclusions fallow. If there were such times, then there must have been reasons for the patriarchal law to come to be, which then seems to justify it. The state of affairs of pre-patriarchy serve the patriarchy as a reason why things had to change, it therefore cannot serve the feminists as an utopia they want to reach.

But probably most importantly, it again creates the distinction between the two sexes inside feminist thought. Also, it is problematic to define patriarchy universally (or maternity for that case), since there are different forms of domination.

Foucault sees this assumption as a part of a larger picture of power structures and relationships which regulate political life with purely negative terms, which is through the limitation, prohibition, regulation and control of individuals. The individuals' regulation by such terms are, however, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined and reproduced in accordance to those structures. The system is then creating the power relationships and gendered behaviour and thought in which women are clearly being left with lesser ground. If so, emancipation is in order. Or as Butler puts it, juridical power produces what it claims merely to represent. The law first produces and then conceals the notion of 'subject before the law' in order to invoke the discursive formation as natural

premise that legitimates the law's regulatory hegemony.⁹⁴ Therefore what emerges is that it is important to show how these gendered subjects are being produced along with different axes of domination.

There is no universal patriarchy and no universal feminism, even though western feminism tends to make that claim. The construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject is an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations. This category achieves stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix⁹⁵, which brings me to my third problem. If a universal category of women is formed, has anything actually changed? Or have we just changed some concepts of this category, which already exists anyway and against what feminism is making its claims. All categories include and exclude subjects, it should not matter which subjects the category of women includes or excludes, but that it does so in the first place. Any category of women also seems to assume heterosexuality, which is constructed on binary male and female genders. It is therefore wrong to assume a category of women which only needs to be filled with various components of race, age, class, ethnicity and sexuality in order to become complete.⁹⁶ The only solution is no category of women at all, since all biological females will never fit under any such category.

Unity is also not necessary for political action as it is not assumed as Butler claims. Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently suspended, never fully what it is at any given time. An open coalition then will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and necessary means for the task in hand.⁹⁷

3. Sex and Gender

Another traditional feminist claim is the distinction between sex and gender, which was introduced to dispute biology-is-destiny formulation. When Simone de Beauvoir claims that “one is not born a woman, but rather *becomes* one”, she illustrates the distinction of sex and gender excellently. For her sex is a necessary component of humanness, there is thus no human who is not sexed, and that being sexed is based only on one’s biological body. For Beauvoir sex does not cause gender, but gender is acquired through later learning

⁹⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 3.

⁹⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 20-21.

⁹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 22.

of one's gender, thus only through becoming one's gender, one becomes a woman. One's biological sex however does not presuppose a given gender, meaning then that an anatomical male can attain a female gender and anatomical female a male gender.

Sex and gender distinction therefore claims that whatever the biological differences might be, they are not connected to psychological or social aspects of a person, which is to gender. So that there is no natural connection between sex and gender, and latter is culturally constructed and has no natural causes, masculinity does not necessarily signify a male body and femininity a female one, but that these categories are more free. But when sex and gender are not connected how does it follow that there are only two genders? If there are indeed two genders as there are two sexes it seems that they are connected after all. Or is gender a much more complex concept than simple male-female opposition. And what about sex? Is it really simple biology? If so, on what basis should we decide on one's sex? Hormones, chromosomes or the simple presents of relevant sex organs? Does sex have a history? Is sex free from all social manipulation or is it in fact also gendered?

Following Judith Butler I will not make the traditional sex-gender distinction in what gender is culturally constructed and sex is only one's biological factors and untouched by history and social structures. Butler claims that sex itself is a gendered category, therefore gender is not the cultural interpretation of sex. The body only appears as passive medium on which cultural meanings are being written on or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself.

Butler claims however that "the body" itself is a construction, since they cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender.⁹⁸ Hence in our understanding of sex (or the body) it is always already gendered and we can never say nor think anything about it without it being gendered. The sexually differentiated body already assumes gender, it has always been interpreted culturally, therefore sex has always been gender. One does "become" a woman as Beauvoir had suggested, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one, which does not come from 'sex'. And the body also comes into being through the marks of gender. Gender can be understood as a signification that an already sexually differentiated body assumes. Quoting again Butler:

"Indeed, the task is even more complicated when we realize that the language of biology participates in other kinds of language and reproduces the cultural sedimentation in the objects it purports to

⁹⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 11-12.

discover and neutrally describe.”⁹⁹

Monique Wittig, from whom Butler follows, claims that category of sex is neither invariant nor natural, but a political construction in the service of reproductive sexuality, and from that she concludes that a lesbian is not a woman, since a woman only exists in a binary and oppositional relationship to a man, and further, that lesbian has no category of sex at all, she is beyond sex.¹⁰⁰ “In Wittig’s view, to which we now return, “masculine” and “feminine,” “male” and “female” exist only within the heterosexual matrix; indeed, they are naturalized terms that keep that matrix concealed and, hence, protected from a radical critique.”¹⁰¹

It seems however naïve to assume that from heterosexuality a man and a woman necessarily follow, and at the same time they do not follow from homosexuality. Wittig criticizes “the straight mind” for universalizing its point of view, but through doing that universalizes “the straight mind” herself. There is no reason to assume unity for all heterosexuals, as there is no reason to assume sexual unity for all women or humans. Men and women in a heterosexual union do not necessarily act in accordance to their appointed gender, nor do their genders have to be switched up. When she says: “For us there are, not one or two sexes, but many, as many sexes as there are individuals,” she should keep in mind that there is no reason for that to not to be true also for heterosexuals.

Social discourse that creates heterosexuality, describing it as natural, creates the illusion of binary genders, men and women, where the latter is being dominated by the first. However if this is true, it does not follow that the only solution is no heterosexuality at all if we want to dispose of this construct. There is no reason not to deconstruct heterosexuality itself, which recreates all structure within that union. It seems that Wittig assumes that only homosexuals are able to understand the constructive nature of sex and gender, and heterosexuals are bound with stupidity. This assumption is in no ways better than any other assumption about sex, gender and desire.

Or as Butler puts it: “Wittig’s view refuses the possibility, it seems, of a volitional or optional heterosexuality; yet, even if heterosexuality is presented as obligatory or

⁹⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ Monique Wittig, *One is Not Born a Woman*, (New York: Feminist Issue, 1981).

¹⁰¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 150.

presumptive, it does not follow that all heterosexual acts are radically determined.¹⁰² And also:

“My own conviction is that the radical disjunction posited by Witting between heterosexuality and homosexuality is simply not true, that there are structure of psychic homosexuality within heterosexual relations, and structures of a psychic heterosexuality within gay and lesbian sexuality and relationships. Further, there are other power/discourse centers that construct and structure both gay and straight sexuality; heterosexuality is not the only compulsory display of power that informs sexuality.”¹⁰³

Clearly, as it has been pointed out many times in my work, heterosexuality does operate as the natural norm, dismissing all other sexualities as abnormal, and it acts this way in a forceful and violent way, but it this does not mean that it is the only way it operates.

Going even further, our sexual identities and the objects of our desire are never reducible to simple terms like heterosexuality and homosexuality. As a heterosexual woman I do not desire all men, I have a rather specific object of affection, for example I might find alfa-men attractive or meterosexual men or some other kind of sexual identity. Same goes for a lesbian, who can identify herself firstly as, for example, femme, butch or girl (terms used in lesbian gender identification), and also her object of affection might only be one of these identities and not all. As the example Butler gives of a lesbian femme, who explained that she likes her boys to be girls¹⁰⁴, meaning that her sexual preference is a masculine identity in a female body. Our sexuality, thus, is always a more complex construct than simple hetero- or homosexuality.

Although some feminists still argue that there is a doer, an agent, who is outside of the law or before it in the mode of the unconscious or “after” the law as a postgenital sexuality, it has become the object of a massive criticism, because power relations associated only with the heterosexual position continue to construct sexuality for women even within the terms of a “liberated” heterosexuality. Therefore, if sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is “before,” “outside,” or “beyond” power is a cultural impossibility.¹⁰⁵ Butler's suggestion is that we need to rethink sexuality and identity within the terms of that power itself.

The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames bring into relief the

¹⁰² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 165.

¹⁰³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 165.

¹⁰⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 169.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 42-44.

utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original, which in reality is not an original at all, both heterosexuality and homosexuality are constructed. Homosexuality is to heterosexuality not as copy is to original, but rather as copy is to copy.¹⁰⁶

The multiple ways of constructing gender hold within themselves the possibility to disrupt the constructing of gender. In rethinking Beauvoir's 'woman is not born but becomes one', Butler suggest that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender, and the binary framework for both sex and gender are considered throughout as regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression. Gender is a repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts, a performance. Sex can only be said to be “before the law” in a sense that it culturally and politically undetermined.¹⁰⁷

4. Bodily Pleasures

From previous chapters it fallows that becoming one's gender is becoming naturalized, since gender operates as a natural category with specific traits. This becoming requires a differentiation of bodily pleasures and pleasure parts on the body on the basis of gendered meanings. Pleasure is said to be found in the penis, vagina, breasts or to emanate from them, but this seems to fallow from the already gendered body. In other words, some parts of the body become pleasurable since they corresponds to the normative idea of gender-specific body.¹⁰⁸

Transsexuals often claim a radical discontinuity between sexual pleasures and bodily parts. For them sexual pleasure may require imaginative bodily parts, that they do not posses in the reality. “The phantasmatic nature of desire reveals the body is not as its ground or cause, but as its *occasion* and its *object*.”¹⁰⁹ Always already a cultural sign, the body sets to imaginary meanings it accompanies, but at the same time is never free of imaginary constructions.¹¹⁰ The fantasized sexual body therefore is never really 'real', but a construction, whose “realness” is constructed inside the limits of heterosexuality and in the

¹⁰⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 43.

¹⁰⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 95-96.

¹⁰⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 96.

¹¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 96.

service of heterosexuality.

This also applies to sexual acts. What kind of sexual acts we find pleasurable? What can be considered sexual acts at all? What kind of part should one play in sexual acts? What are the specific means of any sexual act? What arouses us has changed over time, showing that what we think our deepest sexual fantasies or what we consider normal sexual acts, is at least for the most part a social construction.

Today it's probably safe to say that pornography is one of the major factors for young people when they develop their sexual preferences. Sex surrounds us now in every corner; almost everything is being sexualized, and thus sexualizing ourselves has become more and more the norm. Not that we weren't sexualized before, but today 'being sexy' is publicly accepted and even desired, it has become more open. As Foucault so profoundly pointed out, we feel the need to free our sex from the restrictions we think it has been under, and therefore are more opened to any sexualisation.

But what this situation creates is not necessarily more freedom when it comes to sex (as discourse never does), but just different structures that structure our sexuality. When pornography has taken one of the major teacher roles of sexual behaviour for young people, then the young people will practice what mainstream pornography teaches them. That is, that the woman will always enjoy sex however she is taken and that she will also enjoy being hit in the face with sperm. The female will, for the most part, take on the passive role and male, the active and dominant one. As Bourdieu says:

“If the sexual relation appears as a social relation of domination, this is because it is constructed through the fundamental principle of division between the active male and the passive female and because this principle creates, organizes, expresses and directs desire.”¹¹¹

Bourdieu also points out that in all societies men are expected to approach sex as a form of domination and possession, in contrast to women who are supposed to see it as highly emotional, intimate and charged experience.¹¹² Probably for the most people it is obvious that female sexuality is not that simple, and that there is nothing erotic for most women to being splashed in the face, it is not so for everybody and especially not for young people who are still learning about the world and themselves.

¹¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 21.

¹¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 20.

Seeing this sexual behaviour as the norm, will make them accept it as such, and thus practice it in the real world. Pornographic movies continue to create differences between the two sexes, where the male is almost always the dominant participant and the female a more passive one, who is quite often being humiliated. It is not only the women who are willing to submit to humiliation since it has become a part of the mainstream sexuality, but the men experience being in the dominant position erotic for the very same reasons. It seems that we are abandoning some gender-differential aspects of our lives, but creating new ones as we go, which do nothing for the existing power structure that continue to preserve the masculinistic rule.

5. The Performance

“Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established? Does being female constitute a “natural fact” or a cultural performance, or is “naturalness” constitutes through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the category of sex? Divine notwithstanding, gender practices within gay and lesbian cultures often traumatize “the natural” in parody contexts that bring into relief the performative constructions of an original and true sex.”¹¹³

The inner truth of gender is a fabrication. We are our gender in the sense that we are acting out the role of this gender, but true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of the body. It is through one’s body, which one becomes one’s gender, not the other way around. Through our acts, gestures, the way we dress and speak, we are manufacturing our gender, in the disguise of the natural. Or as Butler puts it:

“In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absence that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally constructed, are *performative* in the sense the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactures and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.”¹¹⁴

And again:

“acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of a interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purpose of the regulation of sexuality within

¹¹³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. xxxi.

¹¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 185.

the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.”¹¹⁵

Thus gender can be neither true nor false, but those categories are only put on them by the dominant discourse, which solely decides on such traits. Through transsexuality the performative nature of gender becomes exclusively clear. A transsexual who exaggerates his femininity, who is consciously performing its gender role, the performative nature of gender is apparent. The illusion of gender is clear, when a drag claims his outside appearance is feminine, but his essence inside the body masculine, when it at the same time symbolizes the opposite. That is, that his inside, his gender is feminine and the outside is masculine.¹¹⁶

“Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction “compels” our belief in its necessity and naturalness.”¹¹⁷

The act of gender is a repeated act, through this repetition one becomes one’s gender. “This repetition is at once reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation.”¹¹⁸ Although it is individuals with their individual bodies performing the ‘act’ of gender, it is nevertheless a public act. There are temporal and collective parts to these actions, “gender is a identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in a exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.”¹¹⁹ The ‘act’ of gender is an act which the actors themselves come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.

It follows from this, that if gender acts are in fact performative and not expressive, then these attributes constitute what they are said to express or reveal. As Butler stresses:

“The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which the body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notion of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constructed as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s performative character

¹¹⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 185-186.

¹¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 186.

¹¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 190.

¹¹⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 191.

¹¹⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 191.

and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside of the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.”¹²⁰

If gender has no natural causes and all causal relationships between sex, gender and desire are artificial, then we need to rethink our current understanding of gendering and social and political reason that derives from it. If there is no pre-existing identity and, thus, no true or false gender, then all social, political and personal claims of true gender have no verification and, therefore, all discrimination against any gender or sexuality is not justifiable.

It is necessary, thus, to first, rethink our own understanding of gender and how it is being expressed, and second, to raise generations to come with a more wider understanding of gender. My aim with this paper has been to show that if gender is constructed through sustained social performances and there is neither natural gender nor causal relationships between sex, gender and desire, then all notions of gender and sexuality are equal, and if so, should be understood and accepted as such. My objective is not to deconstruct any existing gender structures or to demolish traditional heterosexual gendered behaviour so that other structures could take their place, but to release gender from any such bounds for a more wider understanding of gender and sexuality.

¹²⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 192-193.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on gender identity, sexuality and structures that come to form these categories. My aim with this paper has been to show that any gender identity or sexuality is socially constructed and has no natural causes, and all causal relationships between sex, gender and desire are artificial. All traditional gender notions are governed under the heterosexual rule, which itself manifests the masculine and feminine genders, posting them as the norm. Gender is attained only through repeated 'acts' of gender, and these acts, gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of a interior and organizing gender core.

The first chapter concentrated on the concept of social constructs that come to form the notion of gender. Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology is an idea that people tend to think about the world in term of binary opposites, in the case of this paper it helped me to understand why we tend to think in terms of masculinity and femininity. Althusser claims that ideology represents imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence, also creating the modes of domination. With the help of Bourdieu, my aim was to show that this concept, although true for the most part, is not conclusive but nevertheless necessary. In introducing the concept of habitus, I wanted to show that though we do live under ideology, it does not define us or our relationship with the world conclusively, and that we are able to exercise choices within the limits of any ideology or social structure.

Going further with the modes of domination, I examined the concept of the incest taboo, which creates a social condition in which women are being dominated by men. Incest taboo postulates that any sexual relationships between blood relatives are prohibited, but with that it also presumes that normal sexuality is always heterosexual. Hidden inside the incest taboo, is also a taboo against homosexuality and, thus, a law for heterosexuality. I also outlined, in Foucault's view, a brief history of sexuality and showed that we are (and probably have always been) transforming our desire into a discourse.

The second chapter of this paper concentrated on more specific acts of gendering, although the concept of these acts had been introduced already in the previous chapter. Oakley shows that with the act of parenting, which consists of manipulation, canalization, verbal appellation and activity exposure, parent(s) are teaching their kids their given gender role, and that they perceive their so doing as normal, reasonable and justified.

Throughout my whole paper I have considered Judith Butler's "Gender Trouble" and her

conception of how sex, as well as gender, is socially constructed. When Beauvoir claims that “one is not born a woman, but rather *becomes* one” she illustrates the traditional feminist concept of sex-gender distinction excellently. Butler, however, claims that sex itself is a gendered category and the body is not a passive medium we are used to think of it as. In our understanding of sex it is always already a gendered category, we can never say nor think anything about sex without it being already gendered.

My aim with this paper was to show that if gender is created through sustained social performances, it means the very notion of essential sex, masculinity and femininity is also constructed. My aim in this paper was not to deconstruct the existing gender notions for them to be replaced with other equally demanding gender notions, but to release gender from any of such bounds, for a more wider understanding of gender. And with that also show that all gender notions are equal, and thus, should be accepted as such, both politically and socially.

Kokkuvõte

Käesolevas töös räägin ma sooidentiteedist, seksuaalsusest ja struktuuridest, mis neid kategooriaid loovad. Mu eesmärk käesoleva tööga on olnud näidata, et kui sooidentiteet ja seksuaalsus on sotsiaalselt konstrueeritud ning nende moodustumisel puuduvad loomulikud põhjused, siis kõik põhjuslikud seosed bioloogilise soo, sotsiaalse soo ja iha vahel on kunstlikud. Kõik traditsioonilised arusaamad soost on reguleeritud heteroseksuaalsuse all, mis ise toodab mees- ja naissugu, postuleerides neid kui loomulikke. Sugu on aga omandatud ainult läbi korduvate 'soo näitemängude', ning need näitemängud, žestid, liigendatud ja kehastatud ihad loovad illusiooni sisemisest ning organiseeritud sootuumast.

Esimeses peatükis keskendun ma sotsiaalsetele struktuuridele, mis meie arusaamu soost loovad. Levi-Straussi struktuurne antropoloogia on idee, mille järgi inimestel on tavaks mõelda läbi kaheüsteemsete vastandlike mallide. Selle töö puhul aitas see mul paremini aru saada, miks meile meeldib mees- ja naissugu vastandada. Althusser väidab, et ideoloogia tähistab inimeste kujutletavat suhet reaalse maailma oludega, luues samal ajal ka domineerimise viise. Bourdieu abiga üritasin aga näidata, et ideoloogiate kontspetsioon on küll tähtis, kuid mitte lõplik. Tutvustades mõistet habitus, näitasin, et olgugi et me tõepoolest elame ideoloogia valitsemise all, ei defineeri ükski ideoloogia meid või meie suhet maailmaga lõplikult ning meil on võimalik ükskõik millise ideoloogia või sotsiaalse struktuuri piires vastu võtta vabasid otsuseid.

Minnes domineerimisviisidega kaugemale, uurisin ma kontspetsiooni intsestitabust, mis loob sotsiaalse olukora, kus mehed domineerivad naisi. Intsestitabu ütleb, et igasugused seksuaalsuhted veresugulaste vahel on keelatud, aga selle varjus ning lisaks sellele eeldab intsestitabu ka, et normaalne seksuaalsus on heteroseksuaalne. Peidus intsesti keelu sees on ka keeld homoseksuaalsusele, ning seega heteroseksuaalsuse seadus. Andsin ülevaate ka, Foucault arusaamade järgi, seksuaalsuse ajaloost ning näitasin, et me transformeerime oma iha diskursuseks.

Teises peatükis keskendusin rohkem konkreetsetele soostumise aktidele. Oakaley näitab laste kasvatamise näitel, mis koosneb manipulatsioonist, suunamisest, nimetamisest ja kokkupuutest teatud tegevustega, et vanemad kasvatavad oma lapsi vastavalt neile osutatud soorollile, ning nad näevad oma osa soorollide tootmises kui normaalset, mõistlikku ja õigustatud.

Läbi kogu mu töö olen ma arvesse võtnud Judith Butleri teost ”*Gender Trouble*” (Soopahandus) ning tema kontseptsiooni sellest, kuidas nii bioloogiline kui sotsiaalne sugu on konstrueeritud läbi sotsiaalsete struktuuride. Kui Beauvoir väidab, et ’naiseks ei sünnita, vaid naiseks saadakse’ illustreerib ta traditsioonilist feminstlikku arusaama bioloogilise ja sotsiaalse soo erinevusest täiuslikult. Butler aga väidab, et bioloogiline sugu ise on sotsiaalne kategooria ning keha ei ole passiivne meedium, millena me oleme harjunud teda võtma. Meie arusaamas meie kehast ja bioloogilisest soost on mõlemad juba seotud sotsiaalse kontseptsiooniga soost ning me tajume ja mõtleme oma bioloogilisest soost ainult läbi selle kontseptsiooni.

Minu eesmärk selle tööga on olnud näidata, et kui sugu on konstrueeritud läbi püsivate sotsiaalsete näitemängude, tähendab see, et arusaam iseseisvast ja põhjuslikust seksuaalsusest, maskuliinsusest ja feminiinsusest on samuti konstrueeritud. Minu eesmärk pole olnud hävitada olemasolevaid ettekujutusi soost selleks, et need ettekujutused oleksid lõpuks asendatud teiste ettekirjutatud ettekujutustega, vaid vabastada sugu igasugustest sellistest piirangutest vabama soo määratlemise suunas. Ning koos sellega ka näidata, et kõik sooidentiteedid on võrdsed ning seega, peaksid olema ka aktsepeeritud sellistena, nii poliitiliselt kui sotsiaalselt.

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