

## I Am an Intersex Bisexual Transgender and So Are You

*A thought experiment in the development and socialization of gender*

***This discussion demonstrates that the social conventions of sex, gender, and normativity are highly simplified and basically very ignorant ideas. It is amazing that they have persisted to the present day. This seems to have resulted from a basic unwillingness to apply rational analysis to the development of appropriate social models and to abandon obviously outmoded models of reality.***

The manifold difficulties human society experiences in dealing with matters concerning sexual orientation and gender identity (SO+GI) as a broad class of related medical and social issues stem directly from a failure to apply critical observation and rational thought to evidence at hand. And this problem does not begin with either the SO or the GI issue, but rather with the basic biology of sexual differentiation.

Our human senses provide streams of mysteriously represented information about our environment through our nervous systems to our brains. There, these vast amounts of real-time data are used to build and maintain a detailed computational model of our environment. While we explore the exterior world directly, by touching, viewing, listening, etc., all these data flow into and update our inner computation modeling the outer world.

We have the ability to change our space-time viewpoint within our mental model. We can remember a previous state and, in our mind, recover enough data to reconstruct significant parts of our previous experience. Similarly, we can project by various mental processes how the state we experience might evolve in future time. For example, we can anticipate the path of a moving object, but our ability to achieve a factual prediction based on a true concept (like Newton's three laws of motion) is limited by our ability to incorporate all possible data about intersecting events that may deflect the object from its course.

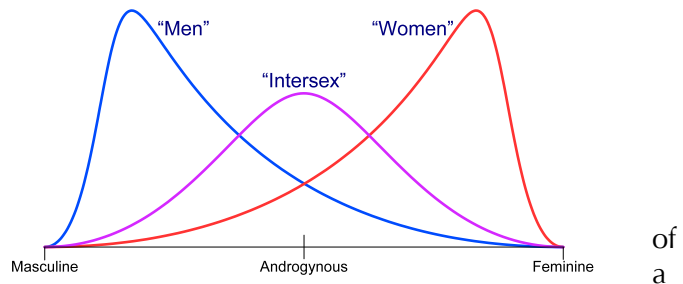
When a child is born in our society the first two questions asked are "Is it alive?" and "Is it a boy or a girl?" The first question is answered by the baby emitting a loud cry. Unfortunately, the baby is in no position to answer the second question. Consider how the second question is answered.

The attendant humans all take a look at the baby's crotch. What follows is usually pretty simple. Is that a penis? Must be a boy. Are those labia (rather than testicles)? Must be a girl. If there's any doubt, wait a moment until the baby pees and that settles it, right?

Of course, that's where the trouble starts. As the child develops, primary sexual development occurs, secondary sexual characteristics appear, and the maturing person becomes adult-identified as either a "man" or a "woman", corresponding to the boy-girl decision made at birth.

If we now examine the two exclusive sets of people society demands we call men and women, we find that, within each set, there is a considerable range in the expression of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Within the male set, subjects vary widely in fertility, genital size, genital functionality, sex hormone production, secondary sex hormone conversions, androgen sensitivity, and overall body characteristics, such as muscularity, skeletal proportions, fat distribution, body hair quality and distribution, etc.

It is easy to imagine a metric of masculinity that scores a vast range of such individual dimensions. Appropriate mathematical operations allow a few important independent dimensions to be identified in the mass data and these can become the basis of properly defined metric of masculinity. Within this vast body of cases, representing everyone considered to be adult male, it is easy to identify regions or subpopulations that, by conventional social interpretations, would be considered relatively more or less “manly”.



Let us suppose we agree on some mathematical function of these independent dimensions that assigns a single number between -1 and +1 for “maleness” that can be computed from the information known about each individual. We repeat this entire conceptual operation for all the adult female population and, for them, compute a single number for “femaleness”. Unfortunately, this will not necessarily correlate well with the maleness measure; however, if we combine all the male and female dimensions and repeat the analysis for the entire population, we can develop a composite measure of male-female balance, similarly ranging from -1 (extreme masculine) to +1 (extreme feminine)

So imagine a line that spans the range from the most masculine adult man to the most feminine adult woman. Against this line, we plot the number of adults socialized and identified as men and women in the population at that level of the metric and we find that, except at the most extreme ends, there is a substantial crossover in primary and secondary characteristics between the so-called “sexes”.

Along this line there is a region where people are, in physical expression of sexual differentiation, very mixed in male/female characteristics. For example, the person with Klinefelter’s Syndrome (genetic XXY) cannot be said to fall clearly into the “male” category, just as the person with Turner’s Syndrome (genetic X) or Trisomy X (genetic XXX) cannot be said to fall clearly into the “female” category. And, when the total genetics of the somatotype are considered, there arise a host of other “intersex” conditions, such as androgen insensitivity of varying degrees and genetic mosaicism, that defy a sharp definition of what is male and what is female.

If all these intersex conditions were to be clearly lumped in the middle of our masculinity-femininity scale it might be possible to maintain the fiction that “men are men and women are women”; however, not only are the two classes of men and women intermixed on the scale, but also the range of intersex factors is so wide that somatotypical and genotypical intersexual individuals occur all over the spectrum with wide variation in conventional sexual characteristics and somatic presentation.

The accompanying figure illustrates these ideas. A person having any particular level of underlying (genetic) balance on the single masculine-feminine scale can be classified as man, woman, or intersex by observation based on somatic presentation.

Most people will examine a set of genitals or other sexual characteristics and apply a single, binary label to the individual—man or woman—and that ends the discussion. In reality, the supposed

man may display any combination of characteristics from extreme hypermasculinity very attenuated masculinity of any type. And, plenty of adult women, sans the eternal crotch parts issue, may exist across an almost equal range, as illustrated by the figure.

The foundation of the development of SO+GI begins with the most basic issues of sexual identity. The human erotic personality component elaborates in multiple layers as a product of individual development and self identification. The materially defined foundation is the set of Genetic Components (GC) that have produced a body for which a Sexual Identity (SI) may be assigned. Understand that SI is simply a label applied to the body developed by a set of GCs. The horizontal scale in the figure corresponds to a measure of SI derived from the manifold expressions of the underlying GCs.

From this beginning, SO+GI develops through a series of levels, each one building on abstractions of the previous level. These levels are:

1. Genetic Components (GC)
2. Sexual Identity (SI)
3. Sexual Orientation (SO)
4. Gender Affinity (GA)
5. Gender Identification (GI)
6. Gender Orientation (GO)

Under current social conventions, since everyone is labeled M (man) or W (woman) as a result of applying a very simplified model of SI to a very complex reality, the scale of sexual orientation (SO) is built on a similarly oversimplified model. Since the prevailing social mode of SO defines two categories—*gay* and *straight*. The more sophisticated may recognize a third category—*bisexual*.

In this current social model there are only four possible SOs, corresponding to the cases in which a nominal man or woman is sexually attracted to a nominal man or woman. We could represent these cases as:  $M \rightarrow W$ ,  $M \rightarrow M$ ,  $W \rightarrow W$ ,  $W \rightarrow M$ . In this model, no middle ground exists. An even more naïve viewpoint groups both  $M \rightarrow W$  and  $W \rightarrow M$  into a single *heterosexual* category, although the actual basis of attraction may be very different for men from Mars and women from Venus.

Pursuing our thought experiment in modeling SI as a scale, rather than a pair of categories, we see that SO is a rich domain in which an individual lying anywhere on the SI scale may experience SO towards a person lying anywhere on the same scale. Thus, SO is rich two-dimensional space of possible pairings, and there is no guarantee that if the SO of A in an  $A \rightarrow B$  relationship is compatible with the SO of B in the complementary  $B \rightarrow A$  relationship. Such asymmetries can lead to the formation of complex polyamorous networks, beginning with the famous “love triangle”, which is the simplest of such relationships.

Another factor that necessarily enters our considerations is the strength of the properly modeled and represented SO. In effect, we can, for each person, map out the strength of their affinity for persons of varying SI, and such affinities are by no means limited to the broad male or female classes. Clearly, SO alone is a much richer subject than the simple gay/straight dichotomy. Bisexuality is a zone of SO that is more balanced across the SI spectrum than gay male, lesbian, or straight, but obviously a realizable state of sexual orientation.

Applying these ideas to the figure, we could say that SO would run from *homo-oriented* on the left to *hetero-oriented* on the right. The curves would then correspond to population distributions for those socially determined to be *homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*. Note that there is no particular correlation of these metrics with the lower level SI assumed.

Next consider how this same approach can be applied to understand the phenomenon of gender identification. Again, to understand the possibilities of something as complex as GI, we begin with something more fundamental, which I will call Gender Affinity (GA).

Just as people vary widely in the somatic expression of their genotype, they also vary widely in their personal behavioral approach to integrating into a social structure and cooperating with others. First through genetics alone, and later through cultural reinforcement of a genetic predisposition, people establish empathic relationships with others in society. These relationships tend to be defined by a few readily identifiable dimensions, although there are surely many more. There is a scale of affinity possible for such factors as aggression, nurturing, selfishness, healing, leading, etc., and each person is drawn to others who intuitively share these ideals. And it is the community of psychic (empathic) identity that defines the varied forms of GA.

When humans view the vast range of personal expression possible for their fellows, they find that the empathic affinity groups in society appear to be associated with specific, narrow ranges of SI, and the labels of the defective social model of SI are then force-fit to these affinities, resulting in certain areas of GA being simplified down to "community of men, hence male" and "community of women, hence female". And thus gender labels become assigned based on GA that may be inconsistent with the individual's SI. And "transgenderism" is thus simply an area where social affinity intuitions are in conflict with the socially perceived SI. But this has nothing to do with the reality of an individual's experience and only reflects defects in an almost universal model of the world.

GA naturally gives rise to GI. That is, the communities that share a common GA, or individuals within those communities, find their own gender identity. But it need not be male or female. It will almost certainly be androgynous to some degree and is, in the final analysis, just another number between -1 and +1 that represents a much richer, multidimensional reality of all the personal tendencies leading to a personal GA and its assumption as an actual GI. But we should not force the GI into a small set of ignorant categories.

Finally, parallel to the relationship between SI and SO, one expects a similar relationship between GI and GO. There is ample evidence of the human ability to form *heterogender* and *homogender* associations independently of SI and SO. Much unnecessary perplexity arises from the desire to identify GO with SO, a relationship which can only be assessed for individuals according to their own developed natures.

Within the multiple levels of abstraction provided by this model, it becomes possible to consider sexual identity separately from gender identity and to understand how sexual orientation and gender orientation can arise independently within a person who is truly free to be their true selves.