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14

Frame Analysis of Gender

From "The Arrangement Between the Sexes"*

In modern industrial society, as apparently in all others, sex is at the base of a fundamental code in accordance with which social interactions and social structures are built up, a code which also establishes the conceptions individuals have concerning their fundamental human nature. This is an oft stated proposition, but until recently its awesomely ramified significance escaped us.

* * *

Now the heart of the matter. It is common to conceive of the differences between the sexes as showing up against the demands and constraints of the environment, the environment itself being taken as a harsh given, present before the matter of sex differences arose. Or, differently put, that sex differences are a biological given, an external constraint upon any form of social organization that humans might devise. There is another way of viewing the question, however. Speculatively one can reverse the equation and ask what could be sought out from the environment or put into it so that such innate differences between the sexes as there are could count—in fact or in appearance—for something. The issue, then, is institutional reflexivity. Consider some examples.

1. Clearly on biological grounds, mother is in a position to breastfeed baby and father is not. Given that recalcitrant fact, it is meet that father temporarily but exclusively takes on such tasks as may involve considerable separation from the household. But this quite temporary biologically-grounded constraint turns out to be extended culturally. A whole range of domestic duties come (for whatever reason) to be defined as inappropriate for a male to perform; and a whole range of occupations away from the household come to be defined as inappropriate for the female. Given these social definitions coalition formation is a natural response to the harsh facts of the world, for only in this way will one be able to acquire what one needs

* Originally published in *Theory and Society*, 1977, 4 (3), pp. 301, 313–19, 324.

and yet not have to engage in labor that is unsuitable for someone of one's kind. Nor is couple formation required only because of gender constraints on task performance. In public life in general women will find that there are things that should be done for them, and men will find that there are things that they should be doing for others, so once again they find they need each other. (So that just as a man may take a wife to save himself from labor that is uncongenial to him, so she can seek him so as to have the company she needs if she is to make full use of public places.) Thus, the human nature imputed to the male causes him to be dependent on a female connection, and the reciprocal condition prevails for women. Who a male finds he needs if he is to act according to his nature is just who needs him so that she can act according to hers. Persons as such do not need one another in these ways, they do so only as gender-based identities.

2. Consider the household as a socialization depot. Take as a paradigm a middle-class pair of cross-sexed sibs. The home training of the two sexes will differ, beginning to orient the girl to taking a domestic, supportive role, and the boy to a more widely based competitive one. This difference in orientation will be superimposed on a fundamental quality in many matters that are felt to count. So from the start, then, there will be two basic principles to appeal to in making claims and warranting allocations. One is the equality of sibs and beyond this of participating members—the share and share alike theme realized in its strongest form in many wills and in its most prevalent form in turn-taking systems. The other is the accounting by sex, as when the larger portion at mealtime is given to the male "because he's a boy" or the softer of two beds is allocated to the female "because she's a girl," or a male is accorded harsher negative sanctions than a female because his is the coarser nature and it will take more to get through to him. And these accountings by appeal to gender will never cease to be used as a handy device to rationalize an allocation whose basis is otherwise determined, to exclude a basis of allocation that might cause disgruntlement, and, even more, to explain away various failures to live up to expectations.

All of this is perfectly well known in principle, although not adequately explored in detail. What is not well appreciated is that differently sexed children coming under the jurisdiction of the same parental authority and living much of their early lives in one another's presence in the same set of rooms produce thereby an ideal setting for role differentiation. For family life ensures that most of what each sex does is done in the full sight of the other sex and with full mutual appreciation of the differential treatment that obtains. Thus, whatever the economic or class level and however well or badly off a female sees she is when compared to children in other families, she can hardly fail to see that her male sib, equal to her when compared to children in other families and often equal, too, in regard to ultimate claims

upon the family resources, is yet judged differently and accorded different treatment from herself by their parents. So, too, a male sib. Thus from the beginning males and females acquire a way of judging deserts and treatment that muffles (by cross-cutting) differences in class and economic power. However superior the social position of a family may be, its female children will be able to learn that they are different from (and somewhat subordinate to) males; and however inferior the social position of a family may be, its male children will be able to learn that they are different from (and somewhat superordinate to) females. It is as if society planted a brother with sisters so women could from the beginning learn their place, and a sister with brothers so men could learn their place. Each sex becomes a training device for the other, a device that is brought right into the house; and what will serve to structure wider social life is thus given its shape and its impetus in a very small and very cozy circle. And it also follows that the deepest sense of what one is—one's gender identity—is something that is given its initial character from ingredients that do not bear on ethnicity or socio-economic stratification, in consequence of which we all acquire a deep capacity to shield ourselves from what we gain and lose by virtue of our placement in the overall social hierarchy. Brothers will have a way of defining themselves in terms of their differences from persons like their sisters, and sisters will have a way of defining themselves in terms of their differences from persons like their brothers, in both cases turning perception away from how it is the sibs in one family are socially situated in a fundamentally different way from the sibs of another family. Gender, not religion, is the opiate of the masses. In any case, we have here a remarkable organizational device. A man may spend his day suffering under those who have power over him, suffer this situation at almost any level of society, and yet on returning home each night regain a sphere in which he dominates. And wherever he goes beyond the household, women can be there to prop up his show of competence. It is not merely that your male executive has a female secretary, but (as now often remarked) his drop-out son who moves up the hierarchy of alternative publishing or protest politics will have female help, too; and had he been disaffected enough to join a rural commune, an appropriate division of labor would have awaited him. And should we leave the real world for something set up as its fictional alternative, a science fiction cosmos, we would find that here, too, males engage in the executive action and have females to help out in the manner of their sex. Wherever the male goes, apparently, he can carry a sexual division of labor with him.

3. In modern times, mating pairs appear naked to each other and are even likely to employ a bathroom at the same time. But beyond this, the mature genitalia of one sex is not supposed to be exposed to the eyes of the other sex. Furthermore, although it is recognized that persons of both sexes are

somewhat similar in the question of waste products and their elimination, the environment in which females engage in this act ought (we in America apparently feel) to be more refined, extensive, and elaborate than that required for males. Presumably out of consideration for the arrangement between the sexes in general, and the female sex-class in particular, it has come to pass, then, that almost all places of work and congregation are equipped with two sets of toilet facilities (a case of parallel organization), differentiated with respect to quality. A case of separate and unequal. Therefore, in very nearly every industrial and commercial establishment, women will be able to break off being exposed to males and their company and retire into an all-female enclave, often in the company of a female friend, and there spend time in toiletry, a longer time presumably, and perhaps more frequently, than males spend in their segregated toilet, and under more genteel environmental conditions. A resting room that is sex-segregated (as many are) may extend this divided realm. There is thus established a sort of with-then-apart rhythm, with a period of the sexes being immersed together, followed by a short period of separation, and so on. (Bars, gyms, locker rooms, pool rooms, etc., accomplish the same sort of periodic segregation, but from the male side, the difference being that whereas female redoubts tend to be furnished more genteely than the surrounding scene, male redoubts [at least in the U.S.] are often furnished less prepossessingly than the surround.) This same pattern seems to be extended outwards from toilets and resting rooms to larger domains. Large stores have floors which merge the sexes but also smaller zones which offer one-sex merchandise patronized very largely by that sex alone. Schools provide coeducational classes, punctuated by gym, sports, and a few other activities that are sex-segregated.

All in all then, one does not so much deal with segregation as with segregative punctuation of the day's round, this ensuring that subcultural differences can be reaffirmed and reestablished in the face of contact between the sexes. It is as if the joining of the sexes were tolerable providing periodic escape is possible; it is as if equality and sameness were a masquerade that was to be periodically dropped. And all of this is done in the name of nicety, of civilization, of the respect owed females, or of the "natural" need of men to be by themselves. Observe that since by and large public places are designed for males (the big exception being large department stores), female facilities have had to be added to ones already established. Predictably, it has been an argument against hiring females that an extra complement of toilet facilities would be necessary and is not available.

Now clearly, if ogling and sexual access is to play the role it does in pair formation in our society, then sequestering of toilet functions by sex would seem to be indicated. And even more clearly, what is thus sequestered is a biological matter in terms of which the sex-classes biologically and markedly

differ. But the sequestering arrangement as such cannot be tied to matters biological, only to folk conceptions about biological matters. The *functioning* of sex-differentiated organs is involved, but there is nothing in this functioning that *biologically* recommends segregation; *that* arrangement is totally a cultural matter. And what one has is a case of institutional reflexivity: toilet segregation is presented as a natural consequence of the difference between the sex-classes, when in fact it is rather a means of honoring, if not producing, this difference.

4. Consider now selective job placement. Traditionally in industrial society women have gravitated to, or have been gravitated to, jobs which sustain the note established for them in households—the garment industry, domestic labor, commercial cleaning, and personal servicing such as teaching, innkeeping, nursing, food handling. In these latter scenes, presumably, it will be easy for us to fall into treating the server as someone to help us in a semi-mothering way, not someone to subordinate coldly or be subordinated by. In service matters closely associated with the body and the self, we are thus able to play down the harshness that male servers might be thought to bring.

Women, especially young, middle-class ones, have also, of course, been much employed in clerical and secretarial labor, which work is often defined as a dead-end job to be filled by someone who dresses well and doesn't expect or want to make a career out of the labor. Presumably secretaries are merely marking time until marriage, preferably in a place where opportunity to "meet" men is to be found. In any case, the age and sex difference between secretary and employer allows for some styling in avuncular terms. By removing the relationship from the strict world of business, the superior can suffer being intimately viewed by a subordinate without feeling that he has lost rank by the association. He can also make minor demands beyond the core of the contract, expecting to be seen as someone whose needs should be attended to however varied these might be—as a child would be attended by a mother. In return he can extend family feeling, using a personal term of address (of course asymmetrically), please-and-thank-you brackets around each of the minor discrete services called for, and gallantry in the matter of opening doors and moving heavy typewriters. He can also allow her to use the telephone for personal calls and can respond to pleas for special time off to accomplish the business of her sex.

So, too, one finds in jobs where women "meet the public"—ticket-takers, receptionists, airhostesses, salespersons—that standards of youthful "attractiveness" apply in employee selection. Which practice is, of course, even more marked in selecting women for advertising displays and the dramatic arts. The consequence is that when a male has business contacts with a female, she is more than otherwise likely to be someone whom he might take

pleasure in associating with. Again, the courtesy he here extends and receives can carry a dash of sexual interest. (It appears that the higher the male reaches in the hierarchies within business, government, or the professions, the classier will be the women he is required to have incidental dealings with, a sign and symbol of success.)

Finally, note that in almost all work settings established as places for thoroughly masculine labor, one or two women can be found engaged in some sort of ancillary work. It turns out, then, that there are few social settings where males will not be in a position to enact courtesies due to the female sex.

In all, then, one can see that selective employment comes to ensure that males are likely to find themselves rather frequently in the presence of females, and that these women will not only tend to allow a personalization of the contact, but will be relatively young and attractive beyond what random selection ought to allow. In that sense, the world that men are in is a social construct, drawing them daily from their conjugal milieu to what appears to be all-male settings; but these environments turn out to be strategically stocked with relatively attractive females, there to serve in a specialized way as passing targets for sexually allusive banter and for diffuse considerateness extended in both directions. The principle is that of less for more, the effect is that of establishing the world beyond the household as a faintly red-light district where men can easily find and safely enjoy interactional favors. Observe that the more a male contents himself with gender pleasantries—systematically available yet intermittent and brief—the more widely can a preferential category of females be shared by males in general. (Indeed, the traditional dating game can be seen not merely as a means of getting the sexes paired, but as a means of giving a large number of men a little of the company of exemplary women.)

5. Among all the means by which differentiation along sex-class lines is fostered in modern society, one stands out as having a special and an especially powerful influence: I refer to our *identification system*, this involving two related matters, our means of discovering "who" it is that has come into our ken, that is, our placement practices, and our means of labeling what it is we have thus placed.

On the placement side, it is clear that the appearance established as appropriate to the two sexes allows for sex typing at a distance. Although recently this arrangement has developed some potential for error, still the system is remarkably effective at any angle and from almost any distance, saving only that viewing be close enough to allow perception of a figure. Effectiveness of placement by sight is matched by sound; tone of voice alone—as on the phone—is sufficient by and large for sexual identification. Indeed, handwriting is effective, too, although perhaps not as fully as appearance and

voice. (Only appreciable differences in age are as effectively betrayed through all three channels; race in America is conveyed through sight and, by and large, through voice but not through handwriting.)

On the naming side, we have a system of terms including proper personal names, titles, and pronouns. These devices are used for giving deference (whether respect, distance, or affection), for specifying who we are addressing or who among those present we are referring to, and for making attributions in written and spoken statements. And in European languages, by and large, except for second-person pronouns, these naming practices inform at least about sex-class, this often being the only matter they do inform about.

Now our placement practices and name practices, taken together as a single system, serve to define who we are to have dealings with and enable these dealings to proceed: and both sets of practices very strongly encourage categorization along sex-class lines. Right from the very start of an interaction, then, there is a bias in favor of formulating matters in sex-relevant terms, such that sex-class provides the overall profile or container, and particularizing properties are then attributed to the outline by way of specification. This is not a small bias. And note that this identification-naming system is overwhelmingly accounted for by the doctrine that consequent discriminations are only natural, something not to be seen as a product of personal or social engineering but rather as a natural phenomenon.

* * *

I have suggested that every physical surround, every room, every box for social gatherings, necessarily provides materials that can be used in the display of gender and the affirmation of gender identity. But, of course, the social interaction occurring in these places can be read as supplying these materials also. Participants in any gathering must take up some sort of microecological position relative to one another, and these positions will provide ready metaphors for social distance and relatedness, just as they will provide sign vehicles for conveying relative rank.

More important, the management of talk will itself make available a swarm of events usable as signs. Who is brought or brings himself into the immediate orbit of another; who initiates talk, who is selected as the addressed recipient, who self-selects in talk turn-taking, who establishes and changes topics, whose statements are given attention and weight, and so forth. As with verbal interaction, so also with joint participation in silent projects such as walking together, arranging objects, and the like. For here, too, organization requires that someone make the decisions and coordinate the activity; and again the opportunity is available, often apparently unavoidably so, for someone to emerge as dominant, albeit in regard to trivial

matters.

An interactional field, then, provides a considerable expressive resource, and it is, of course, upon this field that there is projected the training and beliefs of the participants. It is here that sex-class makes itself felt, here in the organization of face-to-face interaction, for here understandings about sex-based dominance can be employed as a means of deciding who decides, who leads, and who follows. Again, these scenes do not so much allow for the expression of natural differences between the sexes as for the production of that difference itself.

"Gender Display"*

I

Take it that the function of ceremony reaches in two directions, the affirmation of basic social arrangements and the presentation of ultimate doctrines about man and the world. Typically these celebrations are performed either by persons acting to one another or acting in concert before a congregation. So "social situations" are involved—defining these simply as physical arenas anywhere within which persons present are in perceptual range of one another, subject to mutual monitoring—the persons themselves being definable solely on this ground as a "gathering."

It is in social situations, then, that materials for celebrative work must be found, materials which can be shaped into a palpable representation of matters not otherwise packaged for the eye and the ear and the moment. And found they are. The divisions and hierarchies of social structure are depicted microecologically, that is, through the use of small-scale spatial metaphors. Mythic historic events are played through in a condensed and idealized version. Apparent junctures or turning points in life are solemnized, as in christenings, graduation exercises, marriage ceremonies, and funerals. Social relationships are addressed by greetings and farewells. Seasonal cycles are given dramatized boundaries. Reunions are held. Annual vacations and, on a lesser scale, outings on weekends and evenings are assayed, bringing immersion in ideal settings. Dinners and parties are given, becoming occasions for the expenditure of resources at a rate that is above one's mundane self. Moments of festivity are attached to the acquisition of new possessions.

In all of these ways, a situated social fuss is made over what might ordinarily be hidden in extended courses of activity and the unformulated

* Originally published in *Gender Advertisements: Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, 1976; reprinted here from the 1979 edition, pp. 1–9.

experience of their participants; in brief, the individual is given an opportunity to face directly a representation, a somewhat iconic expression, a mock-up of what he is supposed to hold dear, a presentation of the supposed ordering of his existence.

A single, fixed element of a ceremony can be called a "ritual"; the interpersonal kind can be defined as perfunctory, conventionalized acts through which one individual portrays his regard for another to that other.

II

If Durkheim leads us to consider one sense of the term ritualization, Darwin, in his *Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*, leads us, coincidentally, to consider quite another. To paraphrase Julian Huxley (and the ethological position), the basic argument is that under the pressure of natural selection certain emotionally motivated behaviors become formalized—in the sense of becoming simplified, exaggerated, and stereotyped—and loosened from any specific context of releasers, and all this so that, in effect, there will be more efficient signalling, both inter- and intra-specifically.[1] These behaviors are "displays," a species-utilitarian notion that is at the heart of the ethological conception of communication. Instead of having to play out an act, the animal, in effect, provides a readily readable expression of his situation, specifically his intent, this taking the form of a "ritualization" of some portion of the act itself, and this indication (whether promise or threat) presumably allows for the negotiation of an efficient response from, and to, witnesses of the display. (If Darwin leads here, John Dewey, and G. H. Mead are not far behind.)

The ethological concern, then, does not take us back from a ritual performance to the social structure and ultimate beliefs in which the performer and witness are embedded, but forward into the unfolding course of socially situated events. Displays thus provide evidence of the actor's *alignment* in a gathering, the position he seems prepared to take up in what is about to happen in the social situation. Alignments tentatively or indicatively establish the terms of the contact, the mode or style or formula for the dealings that are to ensure among the individuals in the situation. As suggested, ethologists tend to use the term communication here, but that might be loose talk. Displays don't communicate in the narrow sense of the term; they don't enunciate something through a language of symbols openly established and used solely for that purpose. They provide evidence of the actor's alignment in the situation. And displays are important insofar as alignments are.

A version of display for humans would go something like this: Assume all of an individual's behavior and appearance informs those who witness him, minimally telling them something about his social identity, about his mood,

intent, and expectations, and about the state of his relation to them. In every culture a distinctive range of this indicative behavior and appearance becomes specialized so as to more routinely and perhaps more effectively perform this informing function, the informing coming to be the controlling role of the performance, although often not avowedly so. One can call these indicative events displays. As suggested, they tentatively establish the terms of the contact, the mode or style or formula for the dealings that are to ensue between the persons providing the display and the persons perceiving it.

Finally, our special concern: If gender be defined as the culturally established correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning), then gender display refers to conventionalized portrayals of these correlates.

III

What can be said about the structure of ritual-like displays?

1. Displays very often have a dialogic character of a statement-reply kind, with an expression on the part of one individual calling forth an expression on the part of another, the latter expression being understood to be a response to the first.

These statement-response pairs can be classified in an obvious way. There are symmetrical and asymmetrical pairs: mutual first-naming is a symmetrical pair, first-name/sir is an asymmetrical one. Of asymmetrical pairs, some are dyadically reversible, some not: the greetings between guest and host, asymmetrical in themselves, may be reversed between these two persons on another occasion; first-name/title, on the other hand, ordinarily is not reversible. Of dyadically irreversible pairs of rituals, some pair parts are exclusive, some not: the civilian title a male may extend a female is never extended to him; on the other hand, the "Sir" a man receives from a subordinate in exchange for first-name, he himself is likely to extend to *his* superordinate in exchange for first-name, an illustration of the great chain of corporate being.

Observe that a symmetrical display between two individuals can involve asymmetries according to which of the two initially introduced the usage between them, and which of the two begins his part of the mutual display first on any occasion of use.

And symmetry (or asymmetry) itself can be misleading. One must consider not only how two individuals ritually treat each other, but also how they separately treat, and are treated by, a common third. Thus the point about symmetrical greetings and farewells extended between a male and a close female friend is that he is very likely to extend a *different* set, albeit equally symmetrical, to her husband, and she, similarly, a yet different symmetrical set to his wife. Indeed, so deeply does the male-female difference inform our ceremonial life that one finds here a very systematic

"opposite number" arrangement. For every courtesy, symmetrical or asymmetrical, that a woman shows to almost anyone, there will be a parallel one—seen to be the same, yet different—which her brother or husband shows to the same person.

2. Given that individuals have work to do in social situations, the question arises as to how ritual can accommodate to what is thus otherwise occurring. Two basic patterns seem to appear. First, display seems to be concentrated at beginnings and endings of purposeful undertakings, that is, at junctures, so that, in effect, the activity itself is not interfered with. (Thus the small courtesies sometimes performed in our society by men to women when the latter must undergo what can be defined as a slight change in physical state, as in getting up, sitting down, entering a room or leaving it, beginning to smoke or ceasing to, moving indoors or outdoors, suffering increased temperature or less, and so forth.) Here one might speak of "bracket rituals." Second, some rituals seem designed to be continued as a single note across a strip of otherwise intended activity without displacing that activity itself. (Thus the basic military courtesy of standing at attention throughout the course of an encounter with a superior—in contrast to the salute, this latter clearly a bracket ritual.) One can speak here of a "ritual transfix" or "overlay." Observe that by combining these two locations—brackets and overlays—one has, for any strip of activity, a *schedule* of displays. Although these rituals will tend to be perceived as coloring the whole of the scene, in fact, of course, they only occur selectively in it.

3. It is plain that if an individual is to give and receive what is considered his ritual due in social situations, then he must—whether by intent or in effect—style himself so that others present can immediately know the social (and sometimes the personal) identity of he who is to be dealt with; and in turn he must be able to acquire this information about those he thus informs. Some displays seem to be specialized for this identificatory, early-warning function: in the case of gender, hair style, clothing, and tone of voice. (Handwriting similarly serves in the situation-like contacts conducted through the mails; name also so serves, in addition to serving in the management of persons who are present only in reference.) It can be argued that although ritualized behavior in social situations may markedly change over time, especially in connection with politicization, identificatory stylings will be least subject to change.

4. There is no doubt that displays can be, and are likely to be, multivocal or polysemic, in the sense that more than one piece of social information may be encoded in them. (For example, our terms of address typically record sex of recipient and also properties of the relationship between speaker and spoken to. So, too, in occupational titles ["agentives"]. In the principal European languages, typically a masculine form is the unmarked case; the

feminine is managed with a suffix which, in addition, often carries a connotation of incompetence, facetiousness, and inexperience.[2]) Along with this complication goes another. Not only does one find that recognition of different statuses can be encoded in the same display, but also that a hierarchy of considerations may be found which are addressed sequentially. For example, when awards are given out, a male official may first give the medal, diploma, prize, or whatever, and then shake the hand of the recipient, thus shifting from that of an organization's representative bestowing an official sign of regard on a soldier, colleague, fellow citizen, etc., to a man showing regard for another, the shift in action associated with a sharply altered facial expression. This seems nicely confirmed when the recipient is a woman. For then the second display can be a social kiss. When Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, then chief of U.S. naval operations, officiated in the ceremony in which Alene Duerk became the first female admiral in the U.S. Navy's history (as director of the Navy Nurse Corps) he added to what was done by kissing her full on the lips.[3] So, too, a female harpist after just completing Ginastera's Harp Concerto, and having just shaken the hand of the conductor (as would a male soloist), is free (as a male is not) to strike an additional note by leaning over and giving the conductor a kiss on the cheek. Similarly, the applause she receives will be her due as a musician, but the flowers that are brought onstage a moment after speak to something that would not be spoken to in a male soloist. And the reverse sequence is possible. I have seen a well-bred father raise his hat on first meeting his daughter after a two-year absence, *then* bend and kiss her. (The hat-raise denoted the relationship between the sexes—presumably "any lady" would have induced it—the kiss, the relation between kin.)

5. Displays vary quite considerably in the degree of their formalization. Some, like salutes, are specified as to form and occasion of occurrence, and failure to so behave can lead to specific sanctions; others are so much taken for granted that it awaits a student of some kind to explicate what everyone knows (but not consciously), and failure to perform leads to nothing more than diffuse unease and a search for speakable reasons to be ill-tempered with the offender.

6. The kind of displays I will be concerned with—gender displays—have a related feature: many appear to be optional.[4] In the case, for example, of male courtesies, often a particular display need not be initiated; if initiated, it need not be accepted, but can be politely declined. Finally, when failure to perform occurs, irony, nudging, and joking complaint, etc., can result—sometimes more as an opportunity for a sally than as a means of social control. Correlated with this basis of looseness is another: for each display there is likely to be a set of functional equivalents wherewith something of the display's effect can be accomplished by alternative niceties. At work, too, is the very process of ritualization. A recipient who declines an

incipient gesture of deference has waited until the intending giver has shown his desire to perform it; the more the latter can come to count on this foreclosure of his move, the more his show of intent can itself come to displace the unfolded form.

7. Ordinarily displays do not in fact provide a representation in the round of a specific social relationship but rather of broad groupings of them. For example, a social kiss may be employed by kin-related persons or cross-sex friends, and the details of the behavior itself may not inform as to which relationship is being celebrated. Similarly, precedence through a door is available to mark organizational rank, but the same indulgence is accorded guests of an establishment, the dependently young, the aged and infirm, indeed, those of unquestionably strong social position and those (by inversion courtesy) of unquestionably weak position. A picture, then, of the relationship between any two persons can hardly be obtained through an examination of the displays they extend each other on any one type of occasion; one would have to assemble these niceties across all the mutually identifying types of contacts that the pair has.

There is a loose gearing, then, between social structures and what goes on in particular occasions of ritual expression. This can further be seen by examining the abstract ordinal format which is commonly generated within social situations. Participants, for example, are often displayed in rankable order with respect to some visible property—looks, height, elevation, closeness to the center, elaborateness of costume, temporal precedence, and so forth—and the comparisons are somehow taken as a reminder of differential social position, the differences in social distance between various positions and the specific character of the positions being lost from view. Thus, the basic forms of deference provide a peculiarly limited version of the social universe, telling us more perhaps, about the special depictive resources of social situations than about the structures presumably expressed thereby.

8. People, unlike other animals, can be quite conscious of the displays they employ and are able to perform many of them by design in contexts of their own choosing. Thus instead of merely "displacing" an act (in the sense described by ethologists), the human actor may wait until he is out of the direct line of sight of a putative recipient, and then engage in a portrayal of attitude to him that is only then safe to perform, the performance done for the benefit of the performer himself or third parties. In turn, the recipient of such a display (or rather the target of it) may actively collaborate, fostering the impression that the act has escaped him even though it hasn't—and sometimes evidentally so. (There is the paradox, then, that what is done for revealment can be partially concealed.) More important, once a display becomes well established in a particular sequence of actions, a section of the sequence can be lifted out of its original context, parenthesized, and used in

a quotative way, a postural resource for mimicry, mockery, irony, teasing, and other sportive intents, including, very commonly, the depiction of make-believe scenes in advertisements. Here stylization itself becomes an object of attention, the actor providing a comment on this process in the very act through which he unseriously realizes it. What was a ritual becomes itself ritualized, a transformation of what is already a transformation, a "hyper-ritualization." Thus, the human use of displays is complicated by the human capacity for reframing behavior.

In sum, then, how a relationship is portrayed through ritual can provide an imbalanced, even distorted, view of the relationship itself. When this fact is seen in the light of another, namely, that displays tend to be scheduled accommodatively during an activity so as not to interfere with its execution, it becomes even more clear that the version ritual gives us of social reality is only that—not a picture of the way things are but a passing exhortative guide to perception.

IV

Displays are part of what we think of as "expressive behavior," and as such tend to be conveyed and received as if they were somehow natural, deriving, like temperature and pulse, from the way people are and needful, therefore, of no social or historical analysis. But, of course, ritualized expressions are as needful of historical understanding as is the Ford car. Given the expressive practices we employ, one may ask: Where do these displays come from?

If, in particular, there are behavioral styles—codings—that distinguish the way men and women participate in social situations, then the question should be put concerning the origins and sources of these styles. The materials and ingredients can come directly from the resources available in particular social settings, but that still leaves open the question of where the formulating of these ingredients, their *styling*, comes from.

The most prominent account of the origins of our gender displays is, of course, the biological. Gender is assumed to be an extension of our animal natures, and just as animals express their sex, so does man: innate elements are said to account for the behavior in both cases. And indeed, the means by which we initially establish an individual in one of the two sex classes and confirm this location in its later years can be and are used as a means of placement in the management of domestic animals. However, although the signs for establishing placement are expressive of matters biological, why we should think of these matters as essential and central is a cultural matter. More important, where behavioral gender display does draw on animal life, it seems to do so not, or not merely, in a direct evolutionary sense but as a source of imagery—a cultural resource. The animal kingdom—or at least certain select parts of it—provides us (I argue) with mimetic models for

gender display, not necessarily phylogenetic ones. Thus, in Western society, the dog has served us as an ultimate model of fawning, of bristling, and (with baring of fangs) of threatening; the horse a model, to be sure, of physical strength, but of little that is interpersonal and interactional.[5]

Once one sees that animal life, and lore concerning that life, provides a cultural source of imagery for gender display, the way is open to examine other sources of display imagery, but now models for mimicry that are closer to home. Of considerable significance, for example, is the complex associated with European court life and the doctrines of the gentleman, especially as these came to be incorporated (and modified) in military etiquette. Although the force of this style is perhaps declining, it was, I think, of very real importance until the second World War, especially in British influenced countries and especially, of course, in dealings between males. For example, the standing-at-attention posture as a means of expressing being on call, the "Sir" response, and even the salute, became part of the deference style far beyond scenes from military life.

For our purposes, there is a source of display much more relevant than animal lore or military tradition, a source closer to home, a source, indeed, right in the home: the parent–child relationship.

V

The parent–child complex—taken in its ideal middle-class version—has some very special features when considered as a source of behavioral imagery. First, most persons end up having been children cared for by parents and/or elder sibs, and as parents (or elder sibs) in the reverse position. So both sexes experience both roles—a sex-free resource. (The person playing the role opposite the child is a mother or older sister as much or more than a father or elder brother. Half of those in the child role will be male, and the housewife role, the one we used to think was ideally suitable for females, contains lots of parental elements.) Second, given inheritance and residence patterns, parents are the only authority in our society that can rightly be said to be both temporary and exerted "in the best interests" of those subordinated thereby. To speak here—at least in our Western society—of the child giving something of equivalence in exchange for the rearing that he gets is ludicrous. There is no appreciable quid pro quo. Balance lies elsewhere. What is received in one generation is given in the next. It should be added that this important unselfseeking possibility has been much neglected by students of society. The established imagery is economic and Hobbesian, turning on the notion of social exchange, and the newer voices have been concerned to show how parental authority can be misguided, oppressive, and ineffective.

Now I want to argue that parent–child dealings carry special value as a

means of orienting the student to the significance of social situations as a unit of social organization. For a great deal of what a child is privileged to do and a great deal of what he must suffer his parents doing on his behalf pertains to how adults in our society come to manage themselves in social situations. Surprisingly the key issue becomes this: *What mode of handling ourselves do we employ in social situations as our means of demonstrating respectful orientation to them and of maintaining guardedness within them?*

It might be useful, then, to outline schematically the ideal middle-class parent–child relationship, limiting this to what can occur when a child and parent are present in the same social situation.

It seems to be assumed that the child comes to a social situation with all its "basic" needs satisfied and/or provided for, and that there is no good reason why he himself should be planning and thinking very far into the future. It is as though the child were on holiday.

There is what might be called orientation license. The child is tolerated in his drifting from the situation into aways, fugues, brown studies, and the like. There is license to flood out, as in dissolving into tears, capsizing into laughter, bursting into glee, and the like.

Related to this license is another, namely, the use of patently ineffective means to effect an end, the means expressing a desire to escape, cope, etc., but not possibly achieving its end. One example is the child's hiding in or behind parents, or (in its more attenuated form) behind his own hand, thereby cutting his eyes off from any threat but not the part of him that is threatened. Another is "pummeling," the kind of attack which is a half-serious joke, a use of considerable force but against an adversary that one knows to be impervious to such an effort, so that what starts with an instrumental effort ends up an admittedly defeated gesture. In all of this one has nice examples of ritualization in the classical ethological sense. And an analysis of what it is to act childishly.

Next, protective intercession by parents. High things, intricate things, heavy things, are obtained for the child. Dangerous things—chemical, electrical, mechanical—are kept from him. Breakable things are managed for him. Contacts with the adult world are mediated, providing a buffer between the child and surrounding persons. Adults who are present generally modulate talk that must deal with harsh things of this world: discussion of business, money, and sex is censored; cursing is inhibited; gossip diluted.

There are indulgence priorities: precedence through doors and onto life rafts is given the child; if there are sweets to distribute, he gets them first.

There is the notion of the erasability of offense. Having done something wrong, the child merely cries and otherwise shows contrition, after which he can begin afresh as though the slate had been washed clean. His immediate emotional response to being called to task need only be full enough and it will be taken as final payment for the delict. He can also assume that love

will not be discontinued because of what he has done, providing only that he shows how broken up he is because of doing it.

There is an obvious generalization behind all these forms of license and privilege. A loving protector is standing by in the wings, allowing not so much for dependency as a copping out of, or relief from, the "realities," that is, the necessities and constraints to which adults in social situations are subject. In the deepest sense, then, middle-class children are not engaged in adjusting to and adapting to social situations, but in practicing, trying out, or playing at these efforts. Reality for them is deeply forgiving.

Note, if a child is to be able to call upon these various reliefs from realities, then, of course, he must stay within range of a distress cry, or within view—scamper-back distance. And, of course, in all of this, parents are provided scenes in which they can act out their parenthood.

You will note that there is an obvious price that the child must pay for being saved from seriousness.

He is subjected to control by physical fiat and to commands serving as a lively reminder thereof: forced rescues from oncoming traffic and from potential falls; forced care, as when his coat is buttoned and mittens pulled on against his protest. In general, the child's doings are unceremoniously interrupted under warrant of ensuring that they are executed safely.

He is subjected to various forms of nonperson treatment. He is talked past and talked about as though absent. Gestures of affection and attention are performed "directly," without engaging him in verbal interaction through the same acts. Teasing and taunting occur, dealings which start out involving the child as a coparticipant in talk and end up treating him merely as a target of attention.

His inward thoughts, feelings, and recollections are not treated as though he had informational rights in their disclosure. He can be queried on contact about his desires and intent, his aches and pains, his resentments and gratitude, in short, his subjective situation, but he cannot go very far in reciprocating this sympathetic curiosity without being thought intrusive.

Finally, the child's time and territory may be seen as expendable. He may be sent on errands or to fetch something in spite of what he is doing at the time; he may be caused to give up territorial prerogatives because of the needs of adults.

Now note that an important feature of the child's situation in life is that the way his parents interact with him tends to be employed to him by other adults also, extending to nonparental kinsmen, acquainted nonkin, and even to adults with whom he is unacquainted. (It is as though the world were in the military uniform of one army, and all adults were its officers.) Thus a child in patent need provides an unacquainted adult a right and even an obligation to offer help, providing only that no other close adult seems to be in charge.

Given this parent–child complex as a common fund of experience, it seems we draw on it in a fundamental way in adult social gatherings. The invocation through ritualistic expression of this hierarchical complex seems to cast a spate of face-to-face interaction in what is taken as no-contest terms, warmed by a touch of relatedness; in short, benign control. The superordinate gives something gratis out of supportive identification, and the subordinate responds with an outright display of gratitude, and if not that, then at least an implied submission to the relationship and the definition of the situation it sustains.

> One afternoon an officer was given a call for illegal parking in a commercial area well off his sector. He was fairly new in the district, and it took him awhile to find the address. When he arrived he saw a car parked in an obviously dangerous and illegal manner at the corner of a small street. He took out his ticket book and wrote it up. As he was placing the ticket on the car, a man came out of the store on the corner. He approached and asked whether the officer had come in answer to his call. When the patrolman said that he had, the man replied that the car which had been bothering him had already left and he hoped the patrolman was not going to tag his car. "Hey, I'm sorry, *pal* but it's already written."
>
> "I expected Officer Reno, he's usually on 6515 car. I'd appreciate it, Officer, if next time you would stop in before you write them up." The patrolman was slightly confused. . . .
>
> He said politely and frankly, "Mister, how would it look if I went into every store before I wrote up a ticket and asked if it was all right? What would people think I was doing?" The man shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "You're right, son. O.K., forget it. Listen stop in sometime if I can help you with something." He patted the patrolman on the shoulder and returned to his business [Rubinstein 1973:161–2].

Or the subordinate initiates a sign of helplessness and need, and the superordinate responds with a volunteered service. A *Time* magazine story on female police might be cited as an illustration:

> Those [policewomen] who are there already have provided a devastating new weapon to the police crime-fighting arsenal, one that has helped women to get their men for centuries. It worked well for diminutive Patrolwoman Ina Sheperd after she collared a muscular shoplifter in Miami last December and discovered that there were no other cops—or even a telephone—around. Unable to summon help, she burst into tears. "If I don't bring you in, I'll lose my job," she sobbed to her prisoner, who chivalrously accompanied her until a squad car could be found.[6]

It turns out, then, that in our society whenever a male has dealings with a female or a subordinate male (especially a younger one), some mitigation of potential distance, coercion, and hostility is quite likely to be induced by application of the parent–child complex. Which implies that, ritually speaking, females are equivalent to subordinate males and both are equivalent to children. Observe that however distasteful and humiliating lessers may find these gentle prerogatives to be, they must give second thought to openly expressing displeasure, for whosoever extends benign concern is free to quickly change his tack and show the other side of his power.

VI

Allow here a brief review. Social situations were defined as arenas of mutual monitoring. It is possible for the student to take social situations very seriously as one natural vantage point from which to view all of social life. After all, it is in social situations that individuals can communicate in the fullest sense of the term, and it is only in them that individuals can physically coerce one another, assault one another, interact sexually, importune one another gesturally, give physical comfort, and so forth. Moreover, it is in social situations that most of the world's work gets done. Understandably, in all societies modes of adaptation are found, including systems of normative constraint, for managing the risks and opportunities specific to social situations.

Our immediate interest in social situations was that it is mainly in such contexts that individuals can use their faces and bodies, as well as small materials at hand to engage in social portraiture. It is here in these small, local places that they can arrange themselves microecologically to depict what is taken as their place in the wider social frame, allowing them, in turn, to celebrate what has been depicted. It is here, in social situations, that the individual can signify what he takes to be his social identity and here indicate his feelings and intent—all of which information the others in the gathering will need in order to manage their own courses of action—which knowledgeability he in turn must count on in carrying out his own designs.

Now it seems to me that any form of socialization which in effect addresses itself to social situations as such, that is, to the resources ordinarily available in any social situation whatsoever, will have a very powerful effect upon social life. In any particular social gathering at any particular moment, the effect of this socialization may be slight—no more consequence, say, than to modify the style in which matters at hand proceed. (After all, whether you light your own cigarette or have it lit for you, you can still get lung cancer.

And whether your job termination interview is conducted with delicacy or abruptness, you've still lost your job.) However, routinely the question is that of whose opinion is voiced most frequently and most forcibly, who makes the minor ongoing decisions apparently required for the coordination of any joint activity, and whose passing concerns are given the most weight. And however trivial some of these little gains and losses may appear to be, by summing them all up across all the social situations in which they occur, one can see that their total effect is enormous. The expression of subordination and domination through this swarm of situational means is more than a mere tracing or symbol or ritualistic affirmation of the social hierarchy. These expressions considerably constitute the hierarchy; they are the shadow *and* the substance.[7]

And here gender styles qualify. For these behavioral styles can be employed in any social situation, and there receive their small due. When mommies and daddies decide on what to teach their little Johnnys and Marys, they make exactly the right choice; they act in effect with much more sociological sophistication than they ought to have—assuming, of course, that the world as we have known it is what they want to reproduce.

And behavioral style itself? Not very stylish. A means of making assumptions about life palpable in social situations. At the same time, a choreography through which participants present their alignments to situated activities in progress. And the stylings themselves consist of those arrangements of the human form and those elaborations of human action that can be displayed across many social settings, in each case drawing on local resources to tell stories of very wide appeal.

VII

I conclude with a sermon.

There is a wide agreement that fishes live in the sea because they cannot breathe on land, and that we live on land because we cannot breathe in the sea. This proximate, everyday account can be spelled out in ever increasing physiological detail, and exceptional cases and circumstances uncovered, but the general answer will ordinarily suffice, namely, an appeal to the nature of the beast, to the givens and conditions of his existence, and a guileless use of the term "because." Note, in this happy bit of folk wisdom—as sound and scientific surely as it needs to be—the land and sea can be taken as there prior to fishes and men, and not—contrary to Genesis—put there so that fishes and men, when they arrived, would find a suitable place awaiting them.

This lesson about the men and the fishes contains, I think, the essence of our most common and most basic way of thinking about ourselves: an accounting of what occurs by an appeal to our "natures," an appeal to the

very conditions of our being. Note, we can use this formula both for categories of persons and for particular individuals. Just as we account for the fact that a man walks upright by an appeal to his nature, so we can account for why a particular amputee doesn't by an appeal to his particular conditions of being.

It is, of course, hardly possible to imagine a society whose members do not routinely read from what is available to the senses to something larger, distal, or hidden. Survival is unthinkable without it. Correspondingly, there is a very deep belief in our society, as presumably there is in others, that an object produces signs that are informing about it. Objects are thought to structure the environment immediately around themselves; they cast a shadow, heat up the surround, strew indications, leave an imprint; they impress a part picture of themselves, a portrait that is unintended and not dependent on being attended, yet, of course, informing nonetheless to whomsoever is properly placed, trained, and inclined. Presumably this indicating is done in a malleable surround of some kind—a field for indications—the actual perturbations in which is the sign. Presumably one deals here with "natural indexical signs," sometimes having "iconic" features. In any case, this sort of indicating is to be seen neither as physical instrumental action in the fullest sense, nor as communication as such, but something else, a kind of by-production, an overflowing, a tell-tale soiling of the environment wherever the object has been. Although these signs are likely to be distinct from, or only a part of, the object about which they provide information, it is their configuration which counts, and the ultimate source of this, it is felt, is the object itself in some independence of the particular field in which the expression happens to occur. Thus we take sign production to be situationally phrased but not situationally determined.

The natural indexical signs given off by objects we call animal (including and principally, man) are often called "expressions," but in the sense of that term here implied, our imagery still allows that a material process is involved, not conventional symbolic communication. We tend to believe that these special objects not only give off natural signs, but do so more than do other objects. Indeed, the emotions, in association with various bodily organs through which emotions most markedly appear, are considered veritable engines of expression. As a corollary, we assume that among humans a very wide range of attributes are expressible: intent, feeling, relationship, information state, health, social class, etc. Lore and advice concerning these signs, including how to fake them and how to see behind fakeries, constitute a kind of folk science. All of these beliefs regarding man, taken together, can be referred to as the doctrine of natural expression.

It is generally believed that although signs can be read for what is merely momentarily or incidentally true of the object producing them—as, say, when an elevated temperature indicates a fever—we routinely seek another

kind of information also, namely, information about those of an object's properties that are felt to be *perduring, overall,* and *structurally basic,* in short, information about its character or "essential nature." (The same sort of information is sought about classes of objects.) We do so for many reasons, and in so doing presume that objects (and classes of objects) have natures independent of the particular interest that might arouse our concern. Signs viewed in this light, I will call "essential," and the belief that they exist and can be read and that individuals give them off is part of the doctrine of natural expression. Note again, that although some of these attributes, such as passing mood, particular intent, etc., are not themselves taken as characteristic, the *tendency* to possess such states and concerns is seen as an essential attribute, and conveying evidence of internal states in a particular manner can be seen as characteristic. In fact, there seems to be no incidental contingent expression that can't be taken as evidence of an essential attribute; we need only see that to respond in a particular way to particular circumstances is what might be expected in general of persons as such or a certain kind of person or a particular person. Note, any property seen as unique to a particular person is likely also to serve as a means of characterizing him. A corollary is that the absence in him of a particular property seen as common to the class of which he is a member tends to serve similarly.

Here let me restate the notion that one of the most deeply seated traits of man, it is felt, is gender; femininity and masculinity are in a sense the prototypes of essential expression—something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characterization of the individual.

But, of course, when one tries to use the notion that human objects give off natural indexical signs and that some of these expressions can inform us about the essential nature of their producer, matters get complicated. The human objects themselves employ the term "expression," and conduct themselves to fit their own conceptions of expressivity; iconicity especially abounds, doing so because it has been made to. Instead of our merely obtaining expressions of the object, the object obligingly gives them to us, conveying them through ritualizations and communicating them through symbols. (But then it can be said that this giving itself has unintended expressive features: for it does not seem possible for a message to be transmitted without the transmitter and the transmission process blindly leaving traces of themselves on whatever gets transmitted.)

There is, straight off, the obvious fact that an individual can fake an expression for what can be gained thereby; an individual is unlikely to cut off his leg so as to have a nature unsuitable for military service, but he might indeed sacrifice a toe or affect a limp. In which case "because of" becomes "in order to." But that is really a minor matter; there are more serious difficulties. I mention three.

First, it is not so much the character or overall structure of an entity that gets expressed (if such there be), but rather particular, situationally-bound features relevant to the viewer. (Sometimes, for example, no more than that the object is such a one and not another.) The notion of essence, character, structure, is, one might argue, social, since there are likely to be an infinite number of properties of the object that could be selected out as the central ones, and, furthermore, often an infinite number of ways of bounding the object from other ones. Thus, as suggested, an attribute which allows us to distinguish its possessor from those he is seen amongst is likely to enter strongly in our characterization of him.

Second, expression in the main is not instinctive but socially learned and socially patterned; it is a socially defined category which employs a particular expression, and a socially established schedule which determines when these expressions will occur. And this is so even though individuals come to employ expressions in what is sensed to be a spontaneous and unselfconscious way, that is, uncalculated, unfaked, natural. Furthermore, individuals do not merely learn how and when to express themselves, for in learning this they are learning to be the kind of object to which the doctrine of natural expression applies, if fallibly; they are learning to be objects that have a character, that express this character, and for whom this characterological expressing is only natural. We are socialized to confirm our own hypotheses about our natures.

Third, social situations turn out to be more than a convenient field of what we take to be natural expression; these configurations are intrinsically, not merely incidentally, a consequence of what can be generated in social situations.

So our concern as students ought not to be in uncovering real, natural expressions, whatever they might be. One should not appeal to the doctrine of natural expression in an attempt to account for natural expression, for that (as is said) would conclude the analysis before it had begun. These acts and appearances are likely to be anything but natural indexical signs, except insofar as they provide indications of the actor's interest in conducting himself effectively under conditions of being treated in accordance with the doctrine of natural expression. And insofar as natural expressions of gender are—in the sense here employed—natural and expressive, what they naturally express is the capacity and inclination of individuals to portray a version of themselves and their relationships at strategic moments—a working agreement to present each other with, and facilitate the other's presentation of, gestural pictures of the claimed reality of their relationship and the claimed character of their human nature. The competency to produce these portraits, and interpret those produced by others, might be said to be essential to our nature, but this competency may provide a very poor picture of the overall relationship between the sexes. And indeed, I think it does.

What the relationship between the sexes objectively is, taken as a whole, is quite another matter, not yet well analyzed.

What the human nature of males and females really consists of, then, is a capacity to learn to provide and to read depictions of masculinity and femininity and a willingness to adhere to a schedule for presenting these pictures, and this capacity they have by virtue of being persons, not females or males. One might just as well say there is no gender identity. There is only a schedule for the portrayal of gender. There is no relationship between the sexes that can so far be characterized in any satisfactory fashion. There is only evidence of the practice between the sexes of choreographing behaviorally a portrait of relationship. And what these portraits must directly tell us about is not gender, or the overall relationship between the sexes, but about the special character and functioning of portraiture.

One can say that female behavioral style "expresses" femininity in the sense of providing an incidental, gratuitous portrait. But Durkheim recommends that such expression is a political ceremony, in this case affirming the place that persons of the female sex-class have in the social structure, in other words, holding them to it. And ethnologists recommend that feminine expression is an indication of the alignment a person of the female sex class proposes to take (or accept) in the activity immediately to follow—an alignment which does not merely express subordination but in part constitutes it. The first points out the stabilizing influence of worshipping one's place in the social scheme of things, the second, the substantial consequences of minor allocations. Both these modes of functioning are concealed from us by the doctrine of natural expression; for that doctrine teaches us that expressions occur simply because it is only natural for them to do so—no other reason being required. Moreover, we are led to accept as a portrait of the whole something that actually occurs at scheduled moments only, something that provides (in the case under question) a reflection not of the differential nature of persons in the two sex classes but of their common readiness to subscribe to the conventions of display.

Gender displays, like other rituals, can iconically reflect fundamental features of the social structure; but just as easily, these expressions can counterbalance substantive arrangements and compensate for them. If anything, then, displays are a symptom, not a portrait. For, in fact, whatever the fundamental circumstances of those who happen to be in the same social situation, their behavioral styles can affirm a contrary picture.

Of course, it is apparent that the niceties of gender etiquette provide a solution for various organizational problems found in social situations—such as who is to make minor decisions which seem better lost than unresolved, who is to give way, who to step forward, who is to follow, who to lead, so that turns, stops, and moving about can be coordinated, and beginnings and endings synchronized. (In the same way, at the substantive level, the traditional division of labor between the sexes provides a workable solution to the organization of certain personal services, the ones we call domestic; similarly, sex-biased linguistic practices, such as the use of "he" as the unmarked relative pronoun for "individual"—amply illustrated in this paper—provide a basis for unthinkingly concerted usage upon which the efficiency of language depends.) But just why gender instead of some other attribute is invoked to deal with these organizational problems, and how well adapted gender is for doing so, is an open question.

In sum, gender, in close connection with age-grade, lays down more, perhaps, than class and other social divisions an understanding of what our ultimate nature ought to be and how and where this nature ought to be exhibited. And we acquire a vast corpus of accounts to be used as a source of good, self-sufficient reasons for many of our acts (particularly as these determine the allocation of minor indulgences and deprivations), just as others acquire a sovereign means of accounting for our own behavior. Observe, there is nothing superficial about this accounting. Given our stereotypes of femininity, a particular woman will find that the way has been cleared to fall back on the situation of her entire sex to account to herself for why she should refrain from vying with men in matters mechanical, financial, political, and so forth. Just as a particular man will find that his failure to exert priority over women in these matters reflects on him personally, giving him warrant for insisting on success in these connections. (Correspondingly, he can decline domestic tasks on the general ground of his sex, while identifying any of his wife's disinclination here as an expression of her particular character.) Because these stereotypes begin to be applied by and to the individual from the earliest years, the accounting it affords is rather well implanted.

I have here taken a functionalist view of gender display and have argued that what, if anything, characterizes persons as sex-class members is their competence and willingness to sustain an appropriate schedule of displays; only the content of the displays distinguishes the classes. Although this view can be seen as slighting the biological reality of sex, it should not be taken as belittling the role of these displays in social life. For the facilitation of these enactments runs so deeply into the organization of society as to deny any slighting view of them. Gender expressions are by way of being a mere show; but a considerable amount of the substance of society is enrolled in the staging of it.

Nor should too easy a political lesson be drawn by those sympathetic to social change. The analysis of sexism can start with obviously unjust discriminations against persons of the female sex-class, but analysis as such cannot stop there. Gender stereotypes run in every direction, and almost as much inform what supporters of women's rights approve as what they disapprove. A principal means men in our society have for initiating or terminating an

everyday encounter on a sympathetic note is to employ endearing terms of address and verbal expressions of concern that are (upon examination) parental in character and profoundly asymmetrical. Similarly, an important ritual available for displaying affectionate concern, emphasizing junctures in discourse, and marking differential conversational exclusiveness is the laying on of the hand, ordinarily an unreciprocatable gesture of male to female or subordinate male.

In all of this, intimacy certainly brings no corrective. In our society in all classes the tenderest expression of affection involves displays that are politically questionable, the place taken up in them by the female being differentiated from and reciprocal to the place taken up by the male. Cross-sex affectional gestures choreograph protector and protected, embracer and embraced, comforter and comforted, supporter and supported, extender of affection and recipient thereof; and it is defined as only natural that the male encompass and the female be encompassed. And this can only remind us that male domination is a very special kind, a domination that can be carried right into the gentlest, most loving moment without apparently causing strain—indeed, these moments can hardly be conceived of apart from these asymmetries. Whereas other disadvantaged groups can turn from the world to a domestic scene where self-determination and relief from inequality are possible, the disadvantage that persons who are female suffer precludes this; the places identified in our society as ones that can be arranged to suit oneself are nonetheless for women thoroughly organized along disadvantageous lines.

And indeed, reliance on the child–parent complex as a source of display imagery is a means of extending intimate comfortable practices outward from their source to the world, and in the wake of this domestication, this only gentling of the world we seem to have, female subordination follows. *Any* scene, it appears, can be defined as an occasion for the depiction of gender difference, and in any scene a resource can be found for effecting this display.

As for the doctrine of expression, it raises the issue of professional, as well as folk, analysis. To accept various "expressions" of femininity (or masculinity) as indicating something biological or social-structural that lies behind or underneath these signs, something to be glimpsed through them, is perhaps to accept a lay theory of signs. That a multitude of "genderisms" point convergently in the same direction might only tell us how these signs function socially, namely, to support belief that there is an underlying reality to gender. Nothing dictates that should we dig and poke behind these images we can expect to find anything there–except, of course, the inducement to entertain this expectation.

Notes

1 *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Series B, No. 772, Vol. 251 (Dec. 29, 1966), p. 250.

2 See the thorough treatment of "feminizers" in Conners (1971).

3 *International Herald Tribune*, June 3–4, 1972.

4 As Zimmerman and West (1977) remind me, the individual has (and seeks) very little option regarding identification of own sex class. Often, however, there will be choice as to which complement of displays is employed to ensure gender placement.

5 An important work here, of course, is Darwin's *Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*. In this treatise a direct parallel is drawn, in words and pictures, between a few gestures of a few animals—gestures expressing, for example, dominance, appeasement, fear—and the same expressions as portrayed by actors. This study, recently and rightly resurrected as a classic in ethology (for indeed, it is in this book that displays are first studied in detail in everything but name), is generally taken as an elucidation of our animal natures and the expressions we consequently share with them. Now the book is also functioning as a source in its own right of cultural beliefs concerning the character and origins of alignment expressions.

6 *Time*, May 1, 1972, p. 60; I leave unconsidered the role of such tales in *Time*'s fashioning of stories.

7 A recent suggestion along this line can be found in the effort to specify in detail the difference between college men and women in regard to sequencing in cross-sexed conversation. See Zimmerman and West (1975), Fishman (1975), and West and Zimmerman (1975). The last discusses some similarities between parent–child and adult male–female conversational practices.

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