

## Orientation as a Living Entity: From Kinsey to Gebser and Tantra in a Sex Education Setting

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It's become déclassé to speak about Kinsey. His scale seems hopelessly binary, a quaint artifact of an earlier time filled with naiveté and unsophisticated notions of homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual lifestyles, but when Professor Alfred C. Kinsey first published Sexual Behavior in the Human Male and created a scale to depict sexual orientation, it was an enormous breakthrough. In 1948, very few people were familiar with the term "homosexual", even if many were aware of same-sex sexual behavior. The idea that sexual behavior varied so greatly that it was necessary to create a scale or spectrum to describe it accurately was a shock to the culture.

What few know or remember about Kinsey's scale is that it was never meant to create an identity for someone, because it only measured 5-year periods of time in the life of an individual. While studying sexual behavior, Kinsey and his team saw such great variety that it became necessary to break up subjects' lifespan to begin to understand it at all.

This is only one aspect of Kinsey's work that I appreciate. Because Kinsey taught me to think about sexual orientation as it relates to time.

When I began to study Tantra with Dr. Rudy Ballantine, a student of Sri Swami Rama, he introduced his students to Jean Gebser and his book, The Ever Present Origin. Ballantine believes Gebser had a Western understanding of some Tantric principles in Indic philosophy. In turn, I have found that these principles and this evolution apply to our understanding of sexual orientation, and perhaps even to our behaviors.

Gebser describes several stages in the evolution of consciousness: the archaic, the magical, the mythical, the mental and the arational-integral (which includes all of the previous stages). These can be compared or identified with the Tantric principles of Prajna, Vaisvanara, Taijasa and Turiya. In brief, these ideas outline the concept that we move from point consciousness (all is one), to line consciousness (polarities and binaries), to space consciousness (three dimensional movement), to time consciousness (for which Einstein is famous for popularizing, and for which we have little language yet).

I noticed the evolution of my own consciousness as it relates to orientation by practicing an exercise with various classes over a period of many years. It began as a simple Kinsey scale, and I was using what has been called a Human Likert Scale as an activity. One wall of the room represented a Kinsey 0, completely heterosexual, and one wall a Kinsey 6, completely homosexual. The middle represented Kinsey 3, persons for whom gender is not a primary criterion for attraction. Students would

place themselves along this line and we would discuss why they had chosen their spot on the wall.

This exercise was a good conversation starter, but it soon became clear to me that it was not the best activity for depicting orientation. It was, in fact, Gebser's line consciousness in action, and it kept the students on a binary or a pole. While it was an improvement over point consciousness--the idea that all is one—(and in this case, that this “one” must be heterosexual)--it wasn't far enough.

I began asking people to place themselves along the scale at 6 years old, 12 years old, 16 years old, and then in units of 10 years. In between each age, I asked for feedback from volunteers regarding why they had chosen to stand where they were, and then changed the age. As they moved around in time, most people showed movement in their orientation along the scale.

This was a great improvement, as it showed fluidity throughout the lifetime. Discussions included overall orientation vs. behavior, biology and environment, cultural pressures at various ages. People love this activity, and it moves individuals and the group through space consciousness--the idea that we can move, morph, or change. It also introduced an element of time, an important shift in our thinking about sexual orientation.

But it wasn't until I had seen this exercise done many times that I began to understand that orientation is not merely how we move ourselves along a line, or in space, or through time. It is not solely our expression of ourselves. I began to see that *orientation was the movement itself*. Orientation moves us. It is its own entity, with its own designs and its own purposes for the planet.

This is Gebser's mythical, or Tantra's Taijasa, where energies begin to form into entities or beings. I can't explain why I felt this way about the movement, but the insight felt true. If we can see our planet as a living entity (some even name this energy and call Her Gaia), then perhaps orientation is one of Hir<sup>1</sup> children. And a diverse child Ze is. If we think of orientation as having a life of Hir own, we can better understand our connectedness to others and to our world. Our sexuality becomes more than just about us: it includes the cosmos.

Who knows why we have straight behavior, gay behavior, pansexual behavior, asexual people, bisexual people, or queer people? Why do we have these identities? Why do we have these orientations? *And why, more to the point, do these orientations and identities have us?* Perhaps the current polyamory movement is the planet's response to a time of epidemic infertility. Perhaps our technology has created fewer needs for separate gender roles, and we now need a greater variety of perspectives to solve intellectual problems such as war, poverty or disease. It is not for me to say, but I suspect that Sexual Orientation as a life force is serving Hir own purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: For those unfamiliar with them, non-gendered pronouns have been employed in the writing of this essay.

When I employ these exercises now, I commonly use activities that include

1. sexual orientation in its many forms,
2. gender identity,
3. gender expression,
4. biological sex, and
5. relationship expression (such as monogamy, asexuality or polyamory)

in the movements. As I understand Gebser and Tantra, these concepts are simultaneously separate, one, and in relationship with each other. Sexual orientation is separate from gender identity, but it is also in relationship with it, and there are places where one cannot exist without the other and therefore the oneness becomes apparent. We can have gay polyamorists, straight asexuals, bisexual trans women, monogamous men.

Part of the reason for embodied exercises during sex education is because these leaps of understanding rarely come from intellectual musings alone. We don't yet have the language for the arational-integral that Gebser speaks of, or the Turiya that is described in the *Mandukyaupanishad*. But as a friend of mine is fond of saying, our bodies are brilliant. Our bodies understand and move through this integral world long before our minds can grasp these concepts.

Orientation as a living entity acknowledges some ecological truths:

- 1) That diversity is necessary for the health and well-being of the planet,
- 2) That each human is connected to a living world and is part of that world,
- 3) That the planet expresses itself through us as part of its own agenda and perhaps its own healing process.

The same is true when we discuss gender identity or relationship expression. These aspects of ourselves are the limbs and digits of our world. They are not simply we humans expressing ourselves, they are life expressing itself through us.