

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PHENOMENON OF TRANSGENDERISM

BY HEDESTHIA June 1978

An Organisation representing Transvestites and Trans-sexuals throughout New Zealand

THERE are several reasons why a person might Crossdress. The main ones are:

1. For a theatrical performance or revue.
2. As a disguise.
3. A "Drag Queen" may use it to attract another person.
4. A Transvestite to enable them to express the feelings of the opposite sex.
5. A Trans-sexual to express the feeling of belonging to the opposite sex.

However, I will first give you some idea of how transvestism came into existence, then secondly, the purpose of HEDESTHIA.

Masculinity and femininity are generally considered as being biologically determined, inseparable from sex and therefore unchangeable. We do not believe this is so. Sex and Gender are not the same thing. Sex is a matter of anatomy and is determined by various biological factors. Gender on the other hand, is a matter of psychology and sociology. It is a social invention and gender roles are learned responses, culturally determined and largely artificial. The requirements for each role vary from culture to culture and from one era to another. Thus we LEARN to be masculine or feminine because our anatomical sex at birth dictates what role we should be trained in. But in cases of mistaken sexual identity, children have been reared in the gender opposite to their true sex and have learned to live the role adequately. This indicates that we all have the capacity to be trained either way.

In view of this it should be obvious that in each of us there are potentials, traits, talents, interests, and characteristics which could, if the situation were appropriate, be developed along the gender lines of the opposite sex.

This being the case it should be no surprise to realise that in some persons these potentials are stronger and nearer the surface of the personality than in others and that they seek expression. One of the principal manifestations of gender in our present society is clothing. It is natural therefore, that in those persons who have a rather larger quota of traits and interests, which in our culture, are those considered to be of the opposite sex, will, in many cases find it satisfying to express this phase of their personality in the attire which is appropriate to their choice. VP.

Thus the phenomenon of TRANSVESTISM comes into existence.

"HEDESTHIA ITSELF"

HEDESTHIA is a social and therapeutic organisation that exists for the purpose of serving the specific needs of Transvestites, Trans-sexuals, Androgynists and Hermaphrodites both male and female. Our term for these people is Transpeople or Transgenderists. Our general interpretation of the terms is as follows:

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| <u>TRANSVESTITE</u> | One who <u>expresses the feelings</u> of the gender role of the opposite sex to a greater or lesser degree. |
| <u>TRANS-SEXUAL</u> | One who <u>expresses the feeling of belonging</u> to the gender Role of the opposite sex to a greater or lesser degree. |
| <u>HERMAPHRODITE</u> | One who possesses the <u>physical attributes</u> of both sexes to a greater or lesser degree. |

PSEUDO-HERMAPHRODITE

One who possesses the mental attributes of both sexes to a greater or lesser degree.

ANDROGYNIST

One who finds compatibility in expressing the alternate feelings of either sex to a greater or lesser degree.

Of course, a person can be any combination of these interpretations. There is definitely no BLACK OR WHITE in the world of TRANSESTIA, but rather varying shades of GREY.

It would seem however, that the factors which influence Hermaphrodites are prenatal whilst those of the Trans-sexual are influenced between birth and puberty. Once the influenced gender becomes established it usually remains fixed for the rest of the person's life. Physical sexual attributes have little or no bearing on the issue, in many cases only adding further confusion. The Transvestite differs somewhat as it would appear that the genderisation does not become fixed but rather oscillates depending on the gender feelings at the time. Transvestism also covers the Fetishistic where erotic stimulation becomes the objectivity and Narcissusism where the objectivity is to be found in the feminine created. Both these latter cases would infer some degree of sexual immaturity.

HEDESTHIA achieves its aims by offering to members the opportunity of meeting at a social level, in group discussions of a therapeutic nature aided by educational talks and related tapes, and through a library and magazine service to members. It also offers counselling services and various other minor services as related to a person's gender preferences and persuasions. Communication is considered an all-important facet especially as many members live in small towns without direct contact with other members, and to this end a bi-monthly magazine called "Trans-Scribe" is published. Through it, the views, news and gossip of the organisation is circulated to all members.

Hedesthia also liases with welfare groups, Social and Medical groups, National Gay Rights Co-alition, Probation Officers, Youthline, Lifeline, Marriage Guidance Counsellors, Mental Health people, Community Health, The National Society on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, and overseas groups.

To facilitate the function of HEDESTHIA, we have established Regional Areas, each with its own Chapter or the potential for one. Each Chapter is controlled in a semi-autonomous manner by the Area Co-ordinator who in turn relates to HEDESTHIA CENTRAL whose function is to direct and co-relate policies and activities as a whole.

Should you have any enquiries, or would like to discuss this phenomenon further, please feel free to contact:

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