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Promiscuous Husbands and Loyal Wives: The Moral Order among Hong Kong Chinese

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Introduction: The moral order of Hong Kong as a public issue

Marital disputes, extramarital affairs and sexual adventures are becoming increasingly visible in Hong Kong in the last decade. Journalistic reports and marriage counseling case records carry many examples. A most illustrative example is the much-publicized family tragedy of Mr. Chan Kin-hong in 1998. Mr. Chan had a mistress in Shenzhen, a town in mainland China just across the border. Her wife in Hong Kong was disappointed, frustrated and furious. She threw their two sons to death from a tall building and then jumped down herself to her death. Mr. Chan behaved bizarrely in front of the press; he expressed no remorse, took no care of the deaths, went to Shenzhen to find his mistress, failing to find her spent the night with two girls he picked up in a karaoke club—all in front of the press. His behaviour caused a public furor. Some local commentators consider that these events amount to a moral anomie.

Preliminary discussion: Theory and data

What do we mean by moral order? It is a time-honored Durkheimian problematic. Most sociologists will agree that to offer an answer is not to offer a definition. In fact, an answer needs to be a theory that can accommodate the question. To seek an answer is to search for a theory. In that theory, the question has an ample opportunity to be explicated and analyzed adequately. An answer will come forth only when the question is explicated and analyzed adequately. That answer is a theoretical answer, one that is provided by the theory adopted or constructed. We are fortunately spared the arduous task of constructing our own theory. The theory of cosmology, grid and group proposed by Mary Douglas, the English anthropologist most active in the seventies, will be shown to serve our purpose well.¹ She is strongly influenced by Durkheim.

We emphasize that adoption of a suitable theory is only half of the task accomplished, the other half, namely, construction of the moral order in Hong Kong as a sociological object² remains to

¹ Among contemporary sociological theories, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field, habitus and practice is another good candidate for the present study. Our view is that Bourdieu's ideas and Douglas's are in many ways mutually accessible to each other. By this we mean that one can extend Bourdieu's to reach Douglas's, and vice-versa. But for the present study Douglas has an edge over Bourdieu. Douglas's theory of cosmology, grid and group begins right away with what is habitus in Bourdieu's theory whereas Bourdieu's theory as a theoretical discourse flows more naturally from field to habitus and practice. His discourse in *Homo Academicus* is an example. The data we have in hand is more readily made use of in the natural flow of Douglas's theory. It should be evident to the readers as this paper develops.

² A sociological object is notions (or categories or a system of classification) specially constructed by the sociologist for the scientific purpose. It is not everyday notions constructed by the social actors themselves, which Bourdieu calls "preconstructions, prenotions, spontaneous notions, spontaneous theory, spontaneous sociology". The scientific construction is meant for studying the everyday construction. It falls within the Durkheimian tradition: "Durkheim ... insists that the sociologist must enter the social world as one enters an unknown world, [and] credits Marx for [insisting] ... that social life must be explained, not by the conception of it created by those who participate in it, but by profound causes which escape awareness." *The Craft*, p.15. Bourdieu has painstakingly expounded it in his numerous publications. He argues, "Epistemological vigilance is particularly necessary in the social sciences, where the separation between everyday opinion and scientific discourse is more blurred than elsewhere ... [F]or the sociologist, familiarity with his social universe is the epistemological obstacle *par excellence*, because it continuously produces fictitious conceptions or systematizations and, at the same time,

be accomplished. The latter is our major ambition. We agree with Pierre Bourdieu, the French philosopher-turned-ethnologist-turned-sociologist, "The fundamental scientific act is the construction of the object."³ It seems that Mary Douglas would agree with it although she has not mentioned Bourdieu in her major works.⁴ We also emphasize that our ambition is not an application of Douglas's theory. It is a continuation of the construction she has begun. "[T]he real logic of the work of constructing an object ... is not done once and for all at the beginning, but in every moment of research, through a multitude of small corrections."⁵ Having clarified our ambition, we can return to the subject matter.

The Durkheimian tradition has a peculiar theoretical property that often goes unnoticed: It must assume a long time frame so that its theoretical entities can be interpreted validly and meaningfully. Although Mary Douglas usually presents her analyses as if the time-frame is theoretically immaterial, or the theoretical entities can be called into service at any time, she in fact has to assume implicitly in her discourse that the reproduction (and the production to a much lower degree) of cosmology, grid and group are continuous, or at least occur very frequently so that they are always interposing and enmeshing one another. It presupposes a sufficiently long time frame to enable the theoretical entities to unfold themselves in some changing and yet empirically identifiable patterns. Like Douglas, we assume a long time frame for the moral order of Hong Kong. It entails that although the moral order is a public issue at the present point in time we need to study it in a time frame that extends back into the past.

Douglas seldom discusses theoretical matters without recourse to empirical data. Also like her, we shall study the problem on the basis of available data, including survey data which are mostly quantitative, qualitative data and reports, and journalistic reports.⁶ We are fortunate that a survey in

the conditions of their credibility." *The Craft*, p.13. "Scientific research is in fact organized around constructed objects that no longer have anything in common with the units divided up by naive perception." *The Craft*, p.33.

³ *The Craft of Sociology*, p. 248. Not all sociologists agree with it. For example, ethno methodologists would surely argue that they do not need to construct scientific objects because their subjects provide them readily with as many categories as they need. They take these categories in their theoretical discourse without pondering on their epistemological status. Bourdieu argues back, "In the case of sociology, this attention to construction [of object] is particularly necessary because the social constructs itself in a sense. Our heads are full of preconstructions. In everyday experience, as in much work in the social sciences, our thinking applies instruments of knowledge which serve to construct the object when they should be taken as the object. [Note: Bourdieu does not speak very clearly here. This sentence should perhaps be read like this: "... our thinking applies instruments of [practical] knowledge which serve to construct the [everyday] object when they [themselves] should be taken as the object [of scientific study]."] Some of the ethno methodologists ... discover[ed] that ... but they failed to arrive at the idea of the necessary break [with preconstructions, prenotions, spontaneous theory]. That's why, in defining social science as a simple "account of accounts", they ultimately remain in the positivist tradition. [Note: Bourdieu states the major characteristic of positivism, "[Positivism describes the] most elementary of [scientific] operations, [namely] observation, ... as a recording that will be faithful insofar as it eschews theoretical presuppositions." *The Craft*, p. 59] This can be seen clearly today with the vogue for discourse analysis ... Their attention to discourse taken at face value, as it presents itself, with a philosophy of science as a *recording* (rather than a construction), led them to ignore the social space in which discourse is produced, the structures that determine it, and so on." *The Craft*, pp. 248–249.

⁴ Mary Douglas does echo with Pierre Bourdieu although she uses a very different language and speaks in a different context, "There is only one kind of differentiation in thought that is relevant, and that provides a criterion that we can apply equally to different cultures and to the history of our own scientific ideas. That criterion is based on the Kantian principle that thought can only advance by freeing itself from the shackles of its subjective conditions. The first Copernican revolution, the discovery that only man's subjective viewpoint made the sun seem to revolve round the earth, is continually renewed. In our own culture mathematics first and later logic, now history, now language and now thought processes themselves and even knowledge of the self and of society, are fields of knowledge progressively freed from the subjective limitations of the mind. To the extent to which sociology, anthropology and psychology are possible in it, our own type of culture needs to be distinguished from others which lack this self-awareness and conscious reaching for objectivity." *Purity and Danger*, p. 78.

⁵ *The Craft*, p. 253.

⁶ We need to attend to some methodological issues concerning the distribution and quality of available data. First, along the time axis the distribution is uneven. Second, among the theoretical entities the distribution is uneven. The same can be said about the quality of data. It usually varies along the time axis and among the theoretical entities. Douglas seldom bothered with them. Perhaps the anthropological examples she works on are those on which data are available evenly and of good quality. Or perhaps her analytical and discursive skills enable her to overcome the difficulties of uneven data availability and poor data quality. Neither of them holds in our case.

1986⁷ affords us some reasonably good local data on cosmology. Mr. Chan Kin-hong, the most infamous disloyal husband in Hong Kong, happened to be in the age cohort (18-27) covered by the survey in 1986.

Mary Douglas: Cosmology, grid and group

Mainly in two of her publications, namely, *Natural Symbols* and *Cultural Bias*, Mary Douglas elaborates her theory of cosmology, grid and group. She divides social experience, that is, experience publicly shared among certain collectivity of individuals, into cosmology and social context, where the latter is a two-dimensional social structure with grid and group as the vertical and horizontal axes. She suggests, "We can concentrate ... upon the interaction of individuals within two social dimensions. One is order, classification, the symbolic system. The other is pressure, the experience of having no option but to consent to the overwhelming demands of other people."⁸ Order, classification, the symbolic system refers to what she defines to be cosmology. Cosmology is not an autonomous cultural agent, and her problematic is "to relate its formal patterns to the structure of social relations,"⁹ the social context, the social structure, the grid-group structure.

To Douglas, the individual needs to "find some principles to guide him to behave in the sanctioned ways and be used for judging others and justifying himself to others. This ... social-accounting approach ... selects out of the total cultural field those beliefs and values which are derivable as justifications for action and which ... [is regarded] as constituting an implicit cosmology."¹⁰ It is supposed to function inside the individual in a specific way: "A classification system [a term Douglas uses interchangeably with cosmology] can be coherently organized for a small part of experience, and for the rest, it can leave the discrete items jangling in disorder. Or it can be highly coherent in the ordering it offers for the whole of experience, but the individuals for whom it is available may enjoy access to another competing and different system [that is, another cosmology], equally coherent in itself, from which they feel free to select segments here and there eclectically, not worrying about the overall lack of coherence. Then there will be conflicts, contradictions and uncoordinated areas of classification for those people. In effect, loss of coherence results in a narrowing of the total scope of the classification system."¹¹

To Douglas, the notion of cosmology is also a methodology and an epistemology. "It is a method of identifying cultural bias, of finding an array of beliefs locked together into relational patterns. The beliefs must be treated as part of the action, and not separated from it as in so many theories of social action. The action or social context, is placed on a two-dimensional map [that is, the

⁷ It is called *Adolescent Sexuality Study 1986*. It was conducted by a group of researchers under the auspices of The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong. The author was a member of the research group. It used a random household sample obtained from the living-quarters sampling frame covering the whole Hong Kong. The frame is maintained regularly by the Census & Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Government. The response rate was 42%. The main sample was subdivided systematically into five equal sub-samples. There were one main questionnaire and five additional questionnaires. Respondents in each of the five sub-samples were required to answer the main questionnaire and one of the five additional questionnaires. The main data set consists of 1305 respondents. Some of the particular questionnaire items this study uses belongs to two of the additional questionnaires; consequently we shall be analyzing a sub-sample whose size is 499. See The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (1989).

⁸ *Natural symbols*, p. 81. Douglas does not write here as clearly as it should have been. The "two social dimensions" should refer to cosmology and social context. The latter is the two-dimensional structure of grid and group. Grid and group exert "pressure" on the individual in different ways. She clearly means both but the language seems to refer group only. The meaning should be clear in subsequent quotations of hers.

⁹ *Natural symbols*, p. 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹ Douglas (1973), p. 82.

grid-group structure] with moral judgments, excuses, complaints and shifts of interest reckoned as the spoken justifications by individuals of the action they feel required to take. As their subjective perception of the scene and its moral implications emanates from each of them individually, it constitutes a collective moral consciousness about man and his place in the universe. The interaction of individual produces a public cosmology capable of being internalized in the consciousness of individuals, if they decide to accept and to stay with it. This particular approach does not assume that they must. ... [This approach] ... floats upon the shifting interaction of intelligent subjects. What ... [is claimed] to be stable and determined is not their individual positions but the range of cosmological possibilities in which they can possibly land themselves by choosing to deal with the social problems in one way or another.”¹² It should be noted that implicit cosmology cannot be an sociological object because it is an actuality (that is, something already occurred inside a particular individual) as far as the sociologist is concerned and hence cannot be objectively studied while public cosmology is always a range of possibilities and hence can be objectively studied. This point is important in order to understand Douglas properly.

What is grid? In *Natural Symbols*, it is “the overall articulation of the categories which constitute a world view[;] ... [it is] the scope and coherent articulation of a system of classification as one social dimension in which any individual must find himself. ... [And people put] pressure on one another in terms of classification.”¹³ In *Cultural Bias*: “however widespread ... [the] manifestation [of grid] over thousands of people, the relevant level of analysis is that at which people find it necessary to explain to each other why they behave as they do.”¹⁴ Douglas specifies the way that the sociologist should make his interpretation: “The term grid suggests the cross-hatch of rules to which individuals are subject in the course of their interaction. As a dimension, it shows a progressive change in the mode of control. ... At the strong end of grid, individuals do not, as such, freely transact with one another. An explicit set of institutionalized classifications keeps them apart and regulates their interactions, restricting their options. ... Moving slowly down grid, the boundaries begin to be arbitrated. Individuals, deciding to transact across them, weaken the classifications. The mode of control changes its nature. It sinks below the surface. The substantive signs of ascribed status are scrapped, one by one, and supplanted by abstract principles. Of these, one is sacred still, that is the holiness of contract itself. As individuals are supposed to transact more and more freely, the rules governing transactions may even multiply. Society turns into a veritable market, and for every new kind of deal, further external effects transforms the social structure.”¹⁵

What is group? Douglas describes: “The group ... is defined in terms of the claims it makes over its constituent members, the boundary it draws around them, the rights it confers on them to use its name and other protections, and the levies and constraints it applies.”¹⁶ “[T]hough the group may be very so big, so that all the members cannot possibly know each other well, there would have to be in all parts of it a pressure from face-to-face situations to draw the same boundaries and accept the alignment of insiders and outsiders.”¹⁷

¹² Ibid., pp. 14–15.

¹³ *Natural symbols*, p. 82.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.7–8.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

Douglas uses “‘grid’ for a dimension of individuation, and ‘group’ for a dimension of social incorporation.”¹⁸ The pair must go together so that the social context, the social structure can be a sociological object in unity. The grid-group structure is a two-dimensional enumeration of possible social positions a particular individual may possibly land in. Mary Douglas has proposed two versions. Because of inherent anomalies in the versions,¹⁹ we suggest that the notion of group should be conceived as two dimensions (or more accurately, sub-dimensions), namely, group activity and group passivity, representing “ego increasingly exerting pressure that controls other people” and “ego increasingly controlled by other people’s pressure”, respectively. We can visualize these two dimensions as a two-dimensional floor (the positive-positive quadrant of y-z plane) to which grid is jointed as the vertical axis (x axis). Thus we conceive grid, group activity and group passivity as the positive-positive-positive quadrant of a three-dimensional space.²⁰ Douglas’s original four types of social environment (namely, weak-grid-weak-group, weak-grid-strong-group, strong-grid-weak-group and strong-grid-strong-group) is then expanded into eight types, with each dimension being divided into a “weak” end (close to the zero position) and a “strong” end (far away from the zero position). Like Douglas’s original typology, ours is a heuristic division more than a theoretical one since the grid-(group-activity-group-passivity) quadrant is theoretically continuous unless the social reality to which it is applied suggests the presence of ruptures. It nevertheless provides a very concise notion of social structure for sociological discussion and will be used in the present paper.

How to relate cosmology to social structure? We shall remember that it is Douglas’s problematic. She conceives that cosmology is more closely related to grid than to group. Grid is the overall articulation of cosmology. The cosmological-social space is a four-dimensional space.²¹ We

¹⁸ Douglas (1978), p. 7.

¹⁹ In *Natural Symbols* she suggests that each of the two axes can extend in both positive and negative directions. The positive direction of the group axis is “ego increasingly controlled by other people’s pressure” while the negative direction is “ego increasingly exerting pressure that controls other people.” The positive direction of the grid axis is “system of shared classifications” while the negative direction is “private system of classification.” There is a zero position at which the individual neither exerts pressure on nor is controlled by other people (Natural symbols, p. 84, Diagram 4). This formulation leads to some conceptual difficulties. Suppose for example, a married couple is a group in the sense of Douglas, and they are very much bonded to each other, that is, each exerts on and at the same time is controlled by the other. Each of them will be located on two points of the group axis, on the opposite sides of the zero position. It is not a reasonable conceptual arrangement because the individual cannot be mapped to a unique point on the grid-group plane. Similarly for the grid axis, an individual can possess his own private system of classification (that is, on the negative side) and at the same time shares part of the system held the group he belongs to (the positive side). In other words, the negative and positive directions of the axis is not mutually exclusive and hence not truly oppositional. They are in fact different dimensions so that the seeming two-dimensional structure should be a four-dimensional one. A few years later, Douglas removes these conceptual difficulties in *Cultural Bias* by restricting the enumeration of possible social positions to the positive-positive quadrant (Douglas (1979), p. 7). She divides the quadrant into four types of social environment, namely, weak-grid-weak-group (w-w), weak-grid-strong-group (w-s), strong-grid-weak-group (s-w) and strong-grid-strong-group (s-s). But in dropping the negative direction of group she throws away the actual complexity of it, that is, one exerts pressure on others in the group and at same time one is controlled by the pressure exerted by others. In preserving both directions, we suggest that the notion of group should be conceived as two dimensions, namely, group activity and group passivity. We can visualize these two dimensions as a two-dimensional floor (the positive-positive quadrant of y-z plane) to which grid is jointed as the vertical axis (x axis). On the other hand, we agree with Douglas in dropping the negative direction of grid. The private system of classification held by any particular individual is not objectively accessible to the sociologist because it is not a range of possibilities.

²⁰ In order to remind ourselves that the two group axes are in fact sub-dimensions of the notion of group, any position in this three dimensional space is denoted as x-(y-z), that is, the three coordinates are not on the same par theoretically. Now we can map an individual to a unique point in the x-(y-z) space.

²¹ To convey this symbolically, let t be cosmology, then we denote the space we denote by (t-x)-(y-z). On the other hand, if one follows Basil Bernstein, the British sociologist, whose ideas Mary Douglas makes very good use of in her *Natural Symbols*, who suggests that “[d]ifferent social structures will generate different speech systems,” (quoted in Natural symbols, p. 46.) then the cosmological-social space should be represented symbolically as t-(x-(y-z)), emphasizing the more fundamental nature of social space x-(y-z) and the dominant direction of the generative mechanism. It can be a reasonable structure of theory but it is surely not a reasonable structure of scientific discourse. The reason is that in Douglas’s heuristic formulation the social space cannot be specified unambiguously without involving cosmology right at the beginning. Consider two individuals whose social positions are the same like w-(w-w). Each of them can submit himself to a different cosmology. The same social position is necessarily explained differently for each of them. To account for their difference one cannot avoid mentioning the particular cosmology that underpins the grid controlling each of them. By specifying first the particular cosmology of the individual, his social position can be uniquely specified and explained. A more reasonable structure of scientific discourse should be the one we have just proposed, that is (t-x)-(y-z). When we discuss the cosmological-social space, we shall follow the

shall discuss the space in a particular order: first, cosmology; second, grid; and third, group activity and group passivity. We note that cosmology is not directional, unlike grid, group activity and group passivity. Particular cosmologies are discrete from one another, and are hence a finite collection of discrete points. They have to be identified empirically.

The married couple as a sociological object

How well does Douglas's theory fit the present study? We have a concrete case, that is, the family tragedy of Mr. Chan, to explain. How can such a bizarre case possibly appear in Hong Kong? We are in fact not interested in this particular Mr. Chan. Rather, we are interested in the possibility that cases like Mr. Chan can happen. We are seeking an explanation for the possibility. The notion of possibility, or more precisely a range of possibilities, derives from another notion, namely the structure of objective social positions. We are therefore not interested in the subjective construction of people like Mr. Chan. The way that such people look at themselves and the social world they are in does not constitute an answer because it throws little light on social possibilities since all it can tell us is about social actuality.²² Part of a Douglasian answer is readily available empirically, that is, on the basis of the 1986 survey data we know fairly well the range of cosmological possibilities Mr. Chan could possibly land on. Of course, the associated theoretical task, namely how to construct the constitution of sexual cosmologies as a sociological object, deserves a more detailed discussion. It is a relatively self-contained discussion and is postponed to a later section of this paper. That being presumed to have been settled for the meanwhile, we shall tackle the more uncertain sociological task of constructing the group and the grid, that is, the social position, that Mr. Chan possibly landed on. Again, it is not the actual social position of this particular Mr. Chan that is of interest to us, it is rather the range of possible social positions that cases like Mr. Chan can land on. Only possibilities can be studied objectively, and social positions are objective in this sense.

It is demographically legitimate to prescribe Mr. Chan a particular age cohort (which happens to correspond to that the 1986 survey covered), but the age cohort is not a group in the sense of Douglas. Nor is it a social incorporation to which he ascribed himself. The sociological question is this: How was Mr. Chan socially incorporated, historically? To answer this question empirically, we need to make use of the age cohort of Mr. Chan: The actual (statistical) pattern of life-course transitions his age cohort underwent is indicative of the range of possible social positions Mr. Chan could land on. Among these life-course transitions the most relevant one is marriage, which locks the person concerned into a durable position in relation to the positions of other persons involved. It can be loosely called the family, and some members of which form the core of a group in the sense of Douglas. Members of this Douglasian group are supposed to exercise "claims, rights, levies and constraints" over one another.²³ The married couple concerned are by definition sexually related to each other and we can safely assume that they exercise claims, rights, levies and constraints over each other in the pertinent matters. Thus the Douglasian group has them as its nucleus. But other than them the group membership remains indeterminate.²⁴ Group boundary remains as a problem, analytically.²⁵

sequence: t, t-x, (t-x)-(y-z). We note in passing that cosmology is not directional, unlike grid and group. Particular cosmologies are discrete from one another, and hence t is simply a finite collection of discrete points.

²² In fact, none of the microsociological theories that focus on interpersonal interactions, including ethno methodology and symbolic interactionism, can tell us very much about social possibilities.

²³ The family and the Douglasian group are two different sociological objects although cross-membership occurs.

²⁴ The internal dynamics of the family determines family members' group membership. Research on the Hong Kong Chinese family so far has not yielded any conclusive evidence as to how members exercise claims, rights, levies and constraints within the family in matters pertaining to spousal sexual relationship.

There is therefore a Douglasian group with a very definite nucleus and a largely indeterminate fringe. Its nucleus, that is, the couple, is socially incorporated to each other, and we can consider it as a Douglasian subgroup. The tragedy of Mr. Chan shows very clearly that tensions arising from the exercise of claims, rights, levies and constraints are most intense there.

But what is the connection among these small Douglasian groups (namely married couples together with their fringes) if they at the end of the day constitute the whole society? A rudimentary answer seems to have been provided by Durkheim long ago in his *The Division of Labour in Society*, that is, his notion of segmental society. If we are allowed to broaden Durkheim's original notion in a way pointed out by our empirical investigation, we shall be able to claim that the married couple (together with its indeterminate fringe) is internally a Douglasian group and externally a Durkheimian segment. It is a theoretical claim of ours, and will be discussed toward the end of this paper. That Hong Kong is a segmental society comprising married couples (together with their indeterminate fringes) implies that it is a collection of simple and almost identical replicas of a common social structure, that is, a range of possible pairs of relational positions, that each couple can find themselves in. Furthermore, it can be easily enumerated using the (expanded) Douglas's eight types of social environment. Each spouse can have only eight possible positions.²⁶ It follows that there are only sixty-four pairs of relational positions for every couple.²⁷ (Mr. and Mrs. Chan could only be in one of them.) This theoretical simplicity needs to be confirmed empirically. We expect that only a very small proportion of that magic number are actually socially significant and the rest remain to be theoretical possibilities that are seldom actualized in Hong Kong.

In *Natural Symbols*, Mary Douglas has constructed another sociological object which is also relevant to our study, namely, her notion of two bodies, that is, the connections between the physical body and the social body. It is another way of stating the connections between self and society, but is particularly apt for our study because the physical body is clearly the focus, the centre of interest of sexual intercourse in which it is put to various uses. But sexual intercourse is also a kind of social intercourse, the physical body and the social body cross one another's path amidst it. We shall discuss this theme of Douglas in connection with the constitution of cosmologies.

The constitution of local cosmologies

What constitutes a cosmology in our case? Since the Douglasian group under investigation is the married couple (together with its indeterminate fringe), then it points to the principles that guide a married person to behave in the sanctioned ways and to judge others and to justify himself/herself to others. "Others" refers to others in the group, and in our case it refers principally to his/her spouse. It is marital relation that a cosmology is concerned with. A cosmology is constituted by principles which are to be upheld, obeyed, believed, used in argument for one's favour, or at least paid lip service to.

Traditional Chinese culture provides a wide range of advices, guidelines and principles with regard to marital relation. Some of them have lost their relevance to contemporary Hong Kong. For

²⁵ It is further complicated by other life-course transitions that involve the couple in other social networks as well. The world of work that they enter is one. The neighborhood that they move in is another. All these social networks (the family, workplace, neighborhood and others) interconnect with one another, but the resulting conglomerate seldom constitutes a Douglasian group unless one is willing to accept a very broad interpretation of the exercise of claims, rights, levies and constraints.

²⁶ That is, w-(w-w), w-(w-s), etc.

²⁷ There are only sixty four combinations, that is, w-(w-w)|w-(w-w), w-(w-w)|w-(w-s), etc. (where the notation | refers to the joining of the respective positions of the couple).

example, the guideline that “men manage external affairs, women internal affairs” is largely irrelevant. One obvious reason is that a great majority of married women are in the labour force. But this is only a superficial reason that can be easily understood as a consequence of the change in economic division of labour between husband and wife.

There is a deeper reason. The Douglasian group we are discussing has only an unambiguous nucleus, that is, the couple themselves, with an indeterminate fringe. Folklore has us to believe that in the old days the Douglasian group was the kinship and hence its fringe was not indeterminate. Even if we believe in the folklore, it can only be said that the Douglasian group has undergone a shrinking such that it becomes what we now see, that is, an unambiguous nucleus with an indeterminate fringe. Marital affairs is now clearly spousal affairs, and spousal affairs are retreating to the nucleus of the group, they are internal affairs, internal to the nucleus, and even its small indeterminate fringe is externalized. They become private affairs for the couple concerned. In other words, external affairs of the Douglasian groups diminish very significantly such that each of them is but an isolated island in the ocean. This is particularly true when spousal sexual affairs are involved. Even those belonging to the fringe (in-laws, etc.) are unlikely to intervene or to comment. Our discussion leads to one point, that is, the boundary of the married couple as the nucleus of a Douglasian group is very rigid and sharp—only the husband and the wife are permitted—and any third party, we mean extramarital affairs of either the husband or the wife, will be a very serious trespass to the nucleus. Boundary maintenance is the most important task for the nucleus.

This rather trivial and yet important point of extramarital affairs provides us a point of departure in selecting the principles that we believe should constitute cosmologies of Hong Kong society. There was in the old days a disparity between men and women in promiscuity. Male promiscuity was tolerated in traditional Chinese culture but female promiscuity was severely punished. In Douglasian terms, the husband is allowed to step out of the boundary of the couple (as a Douglasian group) but the wife is not, or in the traditional discourse second wives were legitimate members of an enlarged Douglasian group. Acceptance or rejection of these two traditional values contributes to the range of cosmological possibilities. The traditional disparity is clearly in serious conflict with the modern notion of gender equality. Outcries for gender equality are loud in Hong Kong. It is hardly surprising when the economic division of labour between the husband and the wife is disappearing fast in a modernizing society. The traditional disparity has lost its economic ground. The couple as a Douglasian group is not an economic entity in the main. The notion of gender equality must enter into the cosmologies, but whether its integration is smooth is another issue. If we look at the traditional disparity at a distance from the modern end, then the notion of gender equality can lead to the emergence of two different forms of parity, as a correction to the disparity. One is that both spouses are prohibited to have extramarital sex while the other is that both are allowed to do so. They are solutions in opposite directions, and their social repercussions are different. They lead to a further expansion of cosmological possibilities.

We suspect that gender equality is probably the only modern ingredient introduced into Hong Kong cosmologies. Other constituent components are largely traditional so long as they are not in very explicit conflict with the gender equality principle. Van Gulik, the Dutch sinologist on Chinese sexuality, has argued that Chinese are pleasure seeking in sex. Its converse is the Victorian attitude which was said to have been imported into Hong Kong along with Western colonial influence since the nineteenth century. We shall not enter the historical debate, and for our purpose it is sufficient ground to regard the sexual pleasure principle (together with its converse) as a constituent component of various possible cosmologies. It is closely related to the traditional disparity of promiscuity. It is often used to justify extramarital sex by the promiscuous partner, who is usually the husband like Mr. Chan. But in traditional Chinese discourse promiscuity is not a synonym to infidelity. A husband can be promiscuous and at the same time loyal. The disloyal husband is a modern concept. On the other

hand, a promiscuous wife by definition is disloyal. It will be seen in the sequel that this is in fact the crux of the matter, but is not necessarily a discursive consequence of gender inequality as Western-influenced Chinese modernists would thoughtlessly jump at it. We shall not discuss it in detail at this point, but for the meantime let us use promiscuity, infidelity and fidelity as a trio of very closely related terms, that is, the mention of one necessarily points to the other two.

Now we can return to the three constituent components, namely, the gender equality principle, the fidelity parity principle and the sexual pleasure principle. They are in a very delicate relationship in moral reasoning. As mentioned earlier, the gender equality principle can force the disparity of promiscuity to change into a parity, but in two different forms. Each of the two forms relates itself in a different way to the sexual pleasure principle. The prohibitive form will protest against it, though mildly. The liberal form will support it, strongly we believe. It is then impossible to consider the relationship between the gender equality principle and the sexual pleasure principle independently of the fidelity parity principle. We have also mentioned earlier that the fidelity parity principle protests against the gender equality principle.

This is one more principle we want to include into the cosmologies, it concerns the physical body. What range of uses does the individual accept of his/her physical body in sex? In more direct terms, what range of sexual acts does he/she accept? Sexual acts include penile-vaginal intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, and homosexual acts. "Marcel Mauss, in his essay on the techniques of the body ... boldly asserted that there can be no such thing as natural behaviour. Every kind of action carried the imprint of learning, from feeding to washing, from repose to movement and, above all, sex. Nothing is more essentially transmitted by a social process of learning than sexual behaviour, and this of course is closely related to morality. ... Mauss saw that the study of bodily techniques would have to take place within a study of symbolic systems."²⁸ Why one sexual act is accepted while another is not is of course determined by the symbolic system held by the individual. A symbolic system is a cosmology, in Douglasian terminology. The key conceptual antinomy used in this case is the physical body versus the social body. "The physical body is a microsm of society, facing the centre of power, contracting and expanding its claims in direct accordance with the increase and relaxation of social pressures. ... The physical body, by the purity rule, is polarized conceptually against the social body. Its requirements are not only subordinated, they are contrasted with social requirements. The distance between the two bodies is the range of pressure and classification in society. A complex social system devises for itself ways of behaving that suggest that human intercourse is disembodied compared with that of animal creation. It uses different degrees of disembodiment to express the social hierarchy."²⁹

What is purity rule? "[It] is that along the dimension from weak to strong pressure the social system seeks progressively to disembody or etherealize the forms of expression; this can be called the purity rule."³⁰ What is social body? It is the disembodied, etherealized body, it is the contrast of the physical body. "The two bodies are the self and society: sometimes they are so near as to be almost merged; sometimes they are far apart. The tension between them allows the elaboration of meanings."³¹ In simple words, one's range of accepted uses of one's physical body is a socially determined self. It is also one of the principles that determines the grid. We call it the physical body principle. Its very close discursive connection with the sexual pleasure principle is obvious. Pleasure presupposes a trespass of boundary, and sexual pleasure presupposes a trespass of physical bodily

²⁸ *Natural symbols*, p. 93.

²⁹ *Natural Symbols*, p. 101.

³⁰ *Natural Symbols*, p. 100.

³¹ *Natural symbols*, p. 112.

boundary. The two may very well be a discursive couple. They are at the same discursive distances to the other principles. Van Gulik argues that Chinese retain a very strong sexual self, and there is no inhibition of sexual acts. It is part of the Chinese traditional culture.

Now we shall take these four principles to be constitutive of the range of possible cosmologies in Hong Kong. The 1986 survey captured them in the following questionnaire statements. It is surely not a perfect capture, and improvements can be made. But it is only a hindsight; at the time of questionnaire design none of the researchers involved envisaged a possible use of data like this.³²

Gender equality principle

GE: Man and woman are equal in sexual rights: A woman is free to engage in any sexual relation in which a man is permitted.

Fidelity parity principle

FPM: It is acceptable for a married man to have sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife.

FPF: It is acceptable for a married woman to have sexual intercourse with a man who is not her husband.

Sexual pleasure principle

SP: Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman is a pleasurable activity but one should not indulge in it.

Physical body principle

PB: Only penile-vaginal intercourse is acceptable, other sexual acts such as oral sex and anal sex between a man and a woman, and homosexual acts, are unacceptable.

Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with each of the statements. Answer options are categorized for the purpose of this paper into "Agree", "No opinion" and "Disagree".³³ There are therefore $3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3 = 243$ possible combinations of answers to the five questionnaire statements. Each combination is a possible cosmology. (The marginal distributions of these constituent components are shown in Table 1.) Like the sixty four possible pairs of social positions for the couple, only a dozen or two of these two hundred forty three possible cosmologies are significant, that is, with a substantial number of people land on them. The immediately following task is to find these significant ones out empirically using the 1986 survey data.

³² Adolf Tsang Kat-tat, Cheung Chan-fai, Ng Man-lun and Peter Xenos contributed most to the inclusion of these questionnaire items. The task force of the survey were not aware of the work of Mary Douglas.

³³ The original answer options were "Strongly agree", "Moderately agree", "Slightly agree", "Slightly disagree", "Moderately disagree" and "Strongly disagree". The first two were emerged into "Agree"; the middle two, "No opinion"; the last two, "Disagree".

The moral battlefield: Cosmological patterns

Cosmologies can be visualized as castles. Actualized cosmologies, that is, castles occupied by some people, are castles from which each castle-occupier sees, watches, talks to, listens to, judges, evaluates, negotiates with, argues with, convinces and is convinced by his/her counterparts who are occupying other castles. Some castles are in alliance with one another, and some are at war. The intensity of war or peace varies between different castles. The state of affairs is surely complex, and it is this complexity that we shall be discerning. We shall proceed with the guidance of one central empirical question: How would different castles speak with one another?

It is in fact a question about different ways to reason out a moral arrangement acceptable to the one who is reasoning (the castle-occupier, metaphorically) and to reason out why other moral arrangements are unacceptable to one, in our case, in the concrete context of Hong Kong. In reasoning out one's own moral position, one needs to be in dialogue with one's counterparts in other moral positions. In staying with one's own moral position, one argues with others everyday so as to reproduce it everyday. In arguing with others, one examines the internal coherence, the internal and external validity, and the external efficacy of one's position. By coherence, validity and efficacy we do not mean scientific criteria; they are cultural and social criteria by which moral positions are examined. Any particular culture or society therefore allows only a few dozens of all the two hundred forty three theoretically possible cosmologies. So is the case of Hong Kong.

Using the 1986 survey data, we can establish just seventeen cosmologies that are statistically significant for men. In plain terms, only seventeen cosmologies are found to have been landed at by a number of men larger than that could have happened randomly.³⁴ The corresponding figure for women is also seventeen. The two sets overlap to a certain extent. (See Table 2.) Out of these significant cosmologies, only three, namely ADDAD, ADDAA and NNDAN, have a share of more than five per cent of the men, and none have a share of more than ten per cent. (See footnote to Table 2 for abbreviations.) As for the women, the three cosmologies with high percentage, namely, ADDAD, ADDAA and ADDAN, have a share of 10.8, 21.3 and 6.6 per cent respectively, and none of the remaining significant cosmologies have a share of more than five per cent. Incidentally, the highest two for the women are also among the highest three for the men; they are cosmologies ADDAD and ADDAA; they are the only dominant, if we may say so, cosmologies in Hong Kong.

The absence of dominant cosmologies among the men is partially caused by one constituent component, namely, the physical body principle.³⁵ The male community was tripartite. Opposing sides, that is, the two "Agree" and "Disagree" ends, are equally strong—a situation that does not happen with the other three principles. (See Table 1.) The equally numerous "No opinion" middle is torn between the two ends, indicating a large ambivalence as regards the range of uses the physical body should be allowed to. It is an ambivalence, not a neutrality. By neutrality we mean that the

³⁴ The statistical reasoning is as follows: There are 243 possible cosmologies. If a man chooses randomly, the probability that he lands on a particular one is $1/243$. The sample size is 211, that is, 211 men were asked to choose a cosmology from the 243 possible cosmologies. It results in a Poisson distribution with a mean of $211/243 = 0.868$ (that is, on the average only 0.868 man will land at any particular cosmology). The probability of having 4 or more men landed on a particular cosmology is 0.01 approximately, while that of having 3 or more is 0.06 approximately. We set the significance level at 0.01, then the associated critical value to reject the null hypothesis, that is, the hypothesis that landing at a particular cosmology is simply random, lies between 3 and 4, close to 4. At this set significance level, a particular cosmology having 4 men or more landed in cannot be reasonably taken for granted to be simply due to random landing, that is, we have to accept that they have a higher rate of being chosen than the random average. The same statistical reasoning applies to the women, with the critical value lying between 4 and 5 due to the larger sample size for women.

³⁵ It can be easily seen: If the physical body principle were taken out of the cosmologies, then ADDAD, ADDAA and ADDAN would merge into one reduced cosmology, resulting in a percentage of $8.5+7.1+2.8 = 18.4$. It would be a sufficiently high share to serve very likely as a point of concentration among the set of significant reduced cosmologies.

individual who pleads neutrality will feel offended if he/she is obliged to cooperate with either side of the opposition. The physical body must have to be used in some way in sexual intercourse, the two opposing sides are the two extremes of a spectrum of sexual uses. It can only be a matter of degree of involvement for anyone who claims “No opinion”, and no right of neutrality is granted to him/her. Women exhibit almost the same strong oppositions and a small and yet still large ambivalence.³⁶

If the body is an image of society as Douglas suggests, Hong Kong society is clearly divided and at the same time for some members ambivalent. Hong Kong society must appear hierarchical and oppressive to some but egalitarian and liberal to some others. The ones who are ambivalent must be those who do not know whom they can believe in. In other words, the body is a varying image of society. This point itself is mundane because very rarely can the body be a constant image of society. It must be varying. What is noteworthy is the degree of variation that we actually found in Hong Kong. It varies so much that the community is almost equally divided into three parts. What is even more noteworthy is that the division does not run along the gender fault-line, contrary to the expectation of many sociologists. The feminists would claim that the female body is abused in a society dominated by the male. Local feminists also claim that Hong Kong is a male-dominated society. If there were truth in the claims, then women should feel oppressed while men should not. Men and women should then hold opposing positions as regards the physical body principle. It did not happen in Hong Kong. Among men, the division was there. So was it among women. (See Table 1.) Among men who agreed with the gender equality principle, the division was there (the pair of cosmologies agreeing on all except the gender equality principle, that is, ADDAD and ADDAA, for example). So was it among women who agreed with the same principle. (See Table 2.)

In order to understand the state of the matter we should perhaps begin with the purity rule. The sexual organ, male or female alike, is placed below the mouth but above the anus, in the Chinese hierarchy of cleanness. The mouth is associated with food but not with sex. Food is always placed on a higher order than sex. “Eating is the sky to the common folk.” The anus is associated with excretion, and is always considered the most unclean part of the body. From it looking upwards, the mouth is the sky, the highest, and therefore the cleanest. The high/low dichotomy is interchangeable with the clean/unclean dichotomy. “Eating and sex are part of human nature” is a most commonly known Confucian statement. But sex is never claimed to be the sky. There is a common saying, “When one is well-fed and well-clothed, one begins to ponder sexual indulgence.” The sex organ is therefore placed between the mouth and the anus, and of course much nearer to the former than the latter. It is reflected in the much lower level of objection to oral sex between a man and a woman than that to anal sex, according to the 1986 survey. The survey also shows that women observed the hierarchy of cleanness more than men did.³⁷ What does that female observance mean socially? It is still probable to be related to male dominance in society, but the connection between the physical body and the social body is clearly more complicated than what the feminists expect. Men perhaps still coerce women into oral and anal sex, but the latter can resist it very morally on the ground of the purity rule which the former need to observe also even though at a lower degree. Consequently, female observance is not simply a submissiveness to male domination, it is also a protection they can seek against it. Because of this dual

³⁶ Unlike, their male counterparts, some dominant cosmologies somehow manage to appear among the female because of a more skewed pattern of distribution in the gender equality principle and the fidelity parity principle.

³⁷ The respondents of the 1986 survey were also asked about their attitudes to oral and anal sex between a man and a woman. The questionnaire statements are "Oral sex between a man and a woman is acceptable" and "Anal sex between a man and a woman is acceptable". The answer options are the same as those for questionnaire statements taken out to represent the constituent components of cosmologies. For male respondents, the percentages of accepting oral sex, being ambivalent about it, and rejecting it are 40.3%, 35.2% and 23.2% respectively. The corresponding percentages for female respondents are 29.7%, 26.6% and 43.0%. For male respondents, the percentages of accepting anal sex, being ambivalent about it, and rejecting it are 16.2%, 32.9% and 49.5% respectively. The corresponding percentages for female respondents are 9.8%, 26.2% and 63.3%.

social purpose, the division of society according to the physical body principle does not run along the gender fault-line. It is the body *per se*, not the male body versus the female body, as a social organizing principle.

The high/low and clean/unclean dichotomies can further interchange with a third one, namely, pleasant/unpleasant. Food is pleasant, faeces is unpleasant. The Chinese love for food is notorious, and needs no demonstration. Paraphrasing with the hierarchy among the mouth, the sex organ and the anus, sex must be in between food and faeces, and very much nearer to food. Sex is therefore pleasant in the Chinese mind, according to a simple Levi-Straussian algebra. The 1986 survey confirms Van Gulik's view (see Table 1). Among the significant cosmologies only one (ADDDD) considers sex unpleasant (see Table 2), implying that most of those who thought so scattered into a diversity of insignificant cosmologies. The sizeable proportion of answers being "No opinion" (about 22 per cent for both men and women; see Table 1) is not simply ambivalence, some of them can be neutrality. Pleasure is only one of the moral reasons for having sex. There are some more reasons, for example, reproduction.³⁸ For someone who claims reproduction as his/her reason, sexual pleasure is irrelevant to him/her, he/she will give "No opinion" as his/her answer to the question on sexual pleasure, and he/she in fact claims neutrality to it. The sexual pleasure principle can therefore be a trichotomy, that is, pleasant/unpleasant/irrelevant, for some people.

When a principle is sufficiently neutralized, that is, when more and more people consider it irrelevant, it will be replaced by another principle which is considered more appropriate. Will it happen to the sexual pleasure principle? It seems to be very unlikely. Ambivalence and neutrality are still a minority among the significant cosmologies. Only three out of seventeen significant cosmologies for men indicate ambivalence or neutrality (??N?, 6.7% of all men; see Table 2),³⁹ and five out of seventeen for women (11.7% of all women). None of them are dominant cosmologies. Will the sexual pleasure principle clash with the physical body principle? It can be an excuse for men to coerce women into oral or anal sex by claiming that sexual pleasure takes precedence over the physical body, but that order of precedence can always be reversed by the unwilling women with equally good metaphysical persuasiveness. The circular logic means unilateral avoidance rather than direct confrontation.

A really serious conflict flares up between men and women in connection with the fidelity parity principle. Table 1 shows this clearly: Men and women were in conflict with each other with respect to husband's fidelity, but they were in harmony with respect to wife's fidelity. The men inclined to permit their own promiscuity more but to tolerate infidelity of their spouses much less. The women were equally prohibitive for themselves and their spouses. With that much can be said, details need to be found from Table 2. Three kinds of parity (?DD?, ?AA?, ?NN?) and two kinds of disparity (?ND?, ?AD?) emerge from the significant cosmologies. The prohibitive parity (?DD??) shows up in the two dominant cosmologies (ADDAD and ADDAA) for women. All but two of the seventeen significant cosmologies for women agree with the prohibitive parity (68.1% of all women). Men showed a much smaller proportion, that is, eight out of seventeen significant cosmologies for men (29.8% of all men). Only one minor cosmology (AAAAD) for men and none for women show a permissive parity (?AA?). Two minor cosmologies (ANNA and ANNAN) for men and two (ANNA and ANNAD) for women show an ambivalent parity (?NN?). We note that the answer

³⁸ The survey does not tell us what these other reasons were, but it does indicate that they existed. There was one questionnaire statement like this: Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman should not be mainly for pleasure. For male respondents, the percentages of agreeing with it, having no opinion about it, disagreeing with it are 50.5%, 25.9% and 22.2% respectively. The corresponding figures for female respondents are 65.0%, 16.4% and 17.8%.

³⁹ The "?" is used here like the so-called "wild card" in computer programming language, a notation for something we do not mind to let vary in our discussion.

option “No opinion” in the case of fidelity parity principle indicates ambivalence, not neutrality. The principle must be relevant to everyone, and hence no one can claim neutrality to it. One minor cosmology (NADAD) for men and none for women show a definite disparity. All cosmologies containing an ambivalent disparity (ANDAA, ANDAN, NNDAD and NNDAN) are for men only (15.2% of all men). All cosmologies with a disparity are in the direction of male promiscuity. From these details a major line of tension is identified, that is, the tension between the prohibitive parity demanded by a great majority of women and the ambivalent disparity demanded by a not insignificant minority of men. They were, metaphorically speaking, two camps of castles at war. They were divided along the gender fault-line, with a not insignificant minority of men joining the female camp.

How would the two camps argue with each other? One thing is clear: Women need not argue with men for gender equality, since there were no massing opponents. None of the seventeen significant cosmologies for men is against the gender equality principle. (See Table 2.) The remaining recalcitrant, still about eleven per cent of all men (see Table 1), scattered into a diversity of insignificant cosmologies, hardly able to form a united front against women on the basis of gender inequality alone. Those female discourses affirming the gender equality principle could begin with wife's high fidelity to marriage. Since husband and wife have equal sexual rights, the wife could demand the husband to be loyal. It is a straightforward argument, covering the major grounds for women.

Before we turn to the disparities, we decipher a small mystery, that is, there are two female discourses which do not agree with the gender equality principle, namely, DDDAA and DDDDD. They are minor cosmologies, and yet they are representing almost half of the women who were against gender equality (11.5 per cent in all; see Table 1). We do not know the direction of inequality they had in mind, and let us assume that it was in the direction of male domination. Notice that they objected to infidelity of both spouses. What does DDD?? mean for women then? Our conjecture is this: These women could have reasoned that if the husband were involved in an extramarital affair the wife should not take revenge by involving herself into another one, that is, she should not follow suit. Their objection to gender equality could be seen as an escape clause to save the marriage, as a back-off to opt for a second best, namely, an disloyal husband, than the worst, namely, a divorce. We should bear in mind that the possibility of an disloyal Hong Kong husband was never slim, as objection raised by men themselves against him was only half-hearted, but a divorce would be much more likely if the wife were disloyal, as shown by the very massive objection both men and women raised against her morally. (see Table 1) A similar explanation can be offered for cosmologies NDD??. Note that no men landed at them (see Table 2), indicating that men do not need such an escape clause or back-off because they would very likely ask for a divorce if their wives were disloyal.

The ambivalent disparity, namely, ANDAA, ANDAN, NNDAD and NNDAN, are male discourses. Notice that all the four cosmologies affirm the sexual pleasure principle. For the first two cosmologies, the argument probably goes like this: “I am against disloyal wives, and I am for equality in sexual rights between men and women. But I am a man who enjoys sex, and I am not sure I can be loyal if there are sexual attractions outside my marriage.” For the last two cosmologies, the argument probably goes like this: “I am against disloyal wives. I am not sure I can be a loyal husband myself because I am a man who enjoys sex. For this reason, I am not sure I should agree with equality in sexual rights between men and women.” Both arguments begin with a strong feeling against disloyal wives, but they differ in progression and conclusion. Both bring the sexual pleasure principle against the gender equality principle. The first ends in a more apologetic tone than the second, but apology is not a weakness in moral reasoning because it is only a consequence of a moral dilemma. Once the

dilemma is acknowledged, the apology is simply a polite way of stating one's defiance.⁴⁰ The male discourse for definite disparity, that is, NADAD, is a singular and yet straightforward claim of the precedence of sexual pleasure over gender equality. If ?ADA? represents Chinese traditionalism, than it is a male protest against imported modernism.

We are finally able to discern the cosmological complexity in a simple pattern. Table 3, which is a re-arrangement of Table 2, shows it clearly. There are two camps of castles at war, along the gender fault-line, the female side (with some men joining it) rely on the gender equality principle as their discursive foundation to argue for fidelity parity (ADD??) while the male rely on the sexual pleasure principle to argue against it (?NDA? and ?ADA?). Both sides have their own sympathizers. The NDD?? and DDD??? sympathize with the female side while the ?NDN? sympathize with the male side. There are equalitarian hedonists (AAAA? and ANNA?), who declare their neutrality to the war by agreeing with both the gender equality principle and the sexual pleasure principle. The female camps, the male camps and the egalitarian hedonists are not afraid to speak aloud and defend their own cosmologies. They are the vocal classes. They will not feel a strong grid because to them there is no "explicit set of institutionalized classifications [that] keeps them apart and regulates their interaction, restricting their options." They are not embarrassed to argue against classifications proposed by other classes. Through arguing between themselves, together they jointly define, produce and reproduce the grid, the rule of the game, for other less adamant or more timid classes. To these vocal classes, the grid is weak.⁴¹

The two classes of sympathizers may feel a stronger grid. The cosmological pattern of society seems to be existing independently of their own thinking, and they abide by the classifications of the camp they sympathize with. Sympathy works ambivalently: they abide by them because they sympathize with them, or since they abide by them they sympathize with them. One is active abiding while the other is passive. It is perhaps true that a sympathizer uses different discourses, some active abiding and some passive, which are anyhow compatible with his cosmology, on different social occasions. Some of his discourses presuppose a strong grid.

For those staying with insignificant cosmologies, it is harder to summarize them into one single class. Perhaps it is not too far from reality that they probably belong to three kinds; the first being those who are very independent-minded, the second being those who are confused by the noises of the three vocal classes and the third being those who are not yet forced by their social life to make a serious cosmological choice. For the first kind the grid is weak. For the second kind the grid is strong because being confused implies that one is constrained by the cosmological pattern jointly defined by the vocal groups when one is acting socially. A confused person is not exempted from social action, he/she needs to act socially in order to carry on his/her daily life. For the third kind the grid has not come fore in their mind. But it will not be long, they will have to make a decision. Marriage, sex and gender are unavoidable.

Let us assume for the sake of calculation that they were divided equally into these three kinds. Now for men, with 23.2 per cent being in the female camp, 15.6 per cent being in the male camp and a

⁴⁰ There was one questionnaire statement like this: "The major reason for people to have non-marital sexual relations (such as premarital sex, extramarital sex, prostitution) is that they find it pleasurable." The percentages of female respondents agreeing, giving no opinion, and disagreeing are 44.1%, 27.6% and 2.8% respectively. The corresponding figures for male respondents are 41.2%, 41.2% and 15.7%. Notice the very low level of objection to the statement among the women. It amounts to an acknowledgement.

⁴¹ In describing them collectively as classes, we do not mean that every member of a class is equally vocal. There are leaders and followers in a class. Even the shiest follower is symbolically vocal because he/she is siding his/her leaders who are necessarily vocal, he/she is standing behind them. He/she abides by the classifications of the class he/she belongs to, but in so doing he/she is at the same time defying adamantly those of other competing classes. As a result he/she does not feel a strong grid.

third of another 45.0 per cent being the independent-minded landed at some insignificant cosmologies, there would have been 53.8 per cent of them feeling a weak grid. A similar calculation gives the result that 60.6 per cent of women would feel a weak grid. These two figures are of course indicative only. A weak grid means a strong individuation. As individuals in society, the women are surely not the weaker sex, if they are not stronger than the men. It is a conclusion quite contrary to the gentle image of the Chinese women which we often deceive ourselves into believing.

The moral order: Intra-couple tensions

If the male camp (they are all men) want to have a less disharmonious marriage, there are only two sources of wives for them. One source is the sympathizers of the female camp. By way of some discourses, some of these wives may be able to live with their chauvinist husbands. The other source is those women staying with insignificant cosmologies which can accommodate discourses that tolerates a male chauvinist fidelity disparity. The female tolerance will mainly be a cosmological consequence because economic division of labour between husband and wife is largely a thing of the past. Mating is of course not an activity strictly in accordance to cosmological compatibility, and therefore compatible wives are hardly to come by for the male camp. Some of them will however manage to find compatible wives. As for these lucky few, the Douglasian group each of them forms with his wife is not a mechanical solidarity in the Durkheimian sense. It must be an organic solidarity. There must be a division of labour, which we have just said is probably not an economic one. Most probably the wife has amended her own cosmology or has managed to construct a discourse from it into a complement of his husband's. This complementarity in some fortunate cases can be as "good fit" as the fabled Chinese yin-yang. We believe it is very rare. For the average, yang is actively exerting pressure on yin unilaterally so that the husband is strong in group activity but weak in group passivity while the wife is the reverse. The marriage may not be a happy one, but one that probably can get by because the husband's grid is weak while the wife's is moderately strong. We tend to believe the majority of marriages of the older generations belonged to this type.

For a man in the male camp who is only able to marry a woman from the female camp, his marital life will be disharmonious. His grid is weak, and so is his wife's. Each of them feels that the other's cosmology is keeping them apart, but none of them will be willing to give up his/her own cosmology and to be regulated by the other's. Each of them is keep his/her own individuation. Both have strong group activity and weak group passivity, because they are always arguing with each other, and each is not to be convinced by the other's argument. Each of them is not willing to be incorporated by the other. Durkheim would say that it is not a solidarity at all. It is surely not a mechanical solidarity because they do not resemble each other. Nor is it an organic solidarity because they are not in a division of labour, or a division of any sort such that they are dependent of each other. Needless to say, both do not tolerate each other, and the marriage is unstable.

At the other extreme, what would happen to a man in the female camp if he marries a women from the same camp? They resemble each other. Grid is weak, because they do not feel any "explicit set of institutionalized classifications [that] keeps them apart and regulates their interaction, restricting their options." Alfred Schutz, the social phenomenologist, would say that the cosmology they are holding jointly remains "unquestioned but always questionable." Group activity and group passivity are also weak for both of them because neither of them needs to pressure or to be pressured by the other. They move in the same orbit, in the same direction, at the same speed. Durkheim would say that it is a mechanical solidarity. Schutz would say that it is a perfect example of the mundane life-world. Is their marital life a harmonious one? The answer is yes if by harmony we mean concurrence in many aspects of perception and opinion. But it can be a dull Douglasian group and a mundane life-world in

which there is no debate and little imagination, especially when one of the partners is not fascinated by the wide range of possible sexual acts. It can be another kind of marital problems.⁴²

As regards the egalitarian hedonists, their marriages are unlikely to be stable regardless who their spouses are. Perhaps most of them do not subscribe to the marriage system. Their discourse has a beauty of simplicity, for it is logical that if one subscribes to the gender equality principle and the sexual pleasure principle at the same time one is very likely to accept a parity of infidelity.

Switches of loyalty between these positions are not expected to be arbitrary. They are consequent upon the relative persuasiveness of various discourses in view of the marital reality one has to face. A woman holding a cosmology of ADDAD (that is, in the female camp) might succumb to NDDAD (a sympathizer of the female camp) if her husband were found to have an extramarital affair. She swallowed the bitterness of a corruption of gender equality while upholding fidelity parity. It is an escape route from divorce, at least discursively. That probably is a daily reality in Hong Kong. The same disappointed woman could move to the egalitarian hedonist position by switching from ADDAD to ANNAD, a preference of gender equality to fidelity parity; the latter position was actually found to be occupied by some local women (see Table 3). It would very likely lead to a divorce unless her husband happened to be an egalitarian hedonist also. These two alternative moves reflect two different hierarchical arrangements for gender equality and fidelity parity.

The same woman would not accept a third alternative move, that is, switch from ADDAD to ANDAD (a possible position for sympathizers of the male camp). Data shows that no women accepted a corruption of fidelity parity in favour of the husband (see Table 3) indicating that the crux of the matter does not lie in gender equality, which can be compromised if the marital reality so demands. Notice that a fidelity disparity in favour of the wife is not a social possibility (it does not appear in any significant cosmology), and is not tolerated by both men and women. It means that the rejection of the ambiguous fidelity disparity in favour of the husband is only a surface phenomenon, the real crux is the husband's infidelity. It is the real source of marital tension between the Hong Kong Chinese couple, it is the single defining characteristic of the male camp and their sympathizers. The tension is almost certain to get worse because for men in the female camp switching to the ambivalent disparity is a socially relatively uninhibited switch. It will be a corruption of male fidelity, at which society at large is not surprised. If the man concerned is in favour of sexual pleasure principle, he will land at the male camp. He switches his loyalty. From the male camp it will be an easier transition to the egalitarian hedonist line, although not everyone will make that choice.

Table 4 summarizes the pattern of intra-couple tensions. Only mechanical solidarity and protest from the husband or the wife are present in the matrix of combinations of all significant cosmologies of a married couple. As mentioned earlier, mechanical solidarity in a married couple is not necessarily stable. Organic solidarity is not totally absent; it hides itself in some of the protests. Protests from one side of the marriage can be dealt with by the other side in several ways. The most straightforward solution is divorce, but it is not the only possible outcome of a marital protest. As already mentioned earlier, the protesting side may call off his/her protest by devising a discourse to justify his/her tolerance with the offending side. Wives who sympathize with the female camp but whose husbands come from the male camp are an example. Their spousal relationship becomes an

⁴² In that case, perhaps happiness that can grow within such a group has its roots in joint ventures into the outside world. The couple will be an extremely strong team because they are not fighting each other at their home base. As a traditional Chinese phrase goes, "one's business prospers if one's family is harmonious." They are likely to grow into an organic solidarity but it will be in the realm of work and outside that of sex and gender. In other words, marriage may cross the boundary to expand into the realm of work. But professionalism and specialization seems to be limiting the possibility of this expansion. It is usually unlikely for a couple to work together in modern Hong Kong. Even if they work together as employees at the same place, division of labour there may be limiting the possibility of solidarity.

organic solidarity of some sort, and somehow they have to find a discourse to justify it. The burden of children can be one. The wife can justify like this: "I protest most strongly against my promiscuous husband, but I have to tolerate him and do not seek a divorce because I do not want my children to suffer." The same argument applies to a husband with a promiscuous wife, although it happens rarely. On the other hand, the offending side can avoid the protest from the other side by simply hiding his/her own cosmology (as words) and his/her infidelity (as deeds). The promiscuous husbands are an example. Again, the disloyal husband can find a discourse to justify his offence: "My circle of business associates are promiscuous. How can I be the odd man out! I also love my family and I do not want a divorce, so I do not argue with my wife about men's promiscuous nature, and hide my sexual adventures from her." His wife is either deceived or pretends to be deceived. An organic solidarity of some sort is achieved by means of a falsity and a complicity of discourse. Each side is telling his/her own story and believing or pretending to believe in the other's story. There is a division of labour of some sort in it. It does not contradict the Durkheimian intention for the notion because division of labour is basically a justified (fairly or unfairly), accepted (willingly or unwillingly) and sustained (harmoniously or disharmoniously) asymmetry in words and deeds, between the two sides of a relationship. Sexual division of labour is asymmetric deeds. Bending one's own argument (like the miserable wife who tolerates her disloyal husband) and lying to one's spouse (like the disloyal husband who secretly follows the male camp) are asymmetric words, which some people regard as immoral.

Will the married couple achieve a more satisfying relationship if they are honest to each other in their words and deeds, try to be on a par with each other, in short, try to be as equal as possible? Douglas would most likely think otherwise, "for equality, like symmetry, is a mechanical principle in its operation. It chops the human diversity of need [male promiscuity, in the present study—addition ours] into its own pre-ordained regularities. The way to humanize the system is to cherish particular categories. The institution [marriage—addition ours] which runs by strict adherence to general rules gives up its own autonomy. If it tries to adopt equality ... or any other hard and fast principle ... it is bound to override the hard case. Furthermore, it is bound to abandon its traditions and so its identity and its original, special purposes. For these humanizing influences depend upon a continuity with the past, benevolent forms of nepotism, irregular charity, ... [etc. I]t would be more practical to experiment with more flexible institutional forms ... But this would mean going into the world, mixing with corruption and sin, dirtying oneself with externals, having some truck with the despised forms, instead of worshipping the sacred mysteries of pure zero."⁴³ Douglas could not be a feminist. The moral order in a married couple seems to have a dim future because the great majority of Hong Kong women are determined to apply to their marriage the fidelity parity principle, a prohibitive form of gender equality, which Douglas will regard as "a mechanical principle in operation". Nor are they prepared to accept an organic solidarity through complicity. They are bound to be disappointed.

Moral anomie of the nineties: A segmental society

Mrs. Chan refused to accept her husband's promiscuity, but she could go nowhere to seek redress because she and her husband formed a Douglasian group whose boundary is strict and rigid. No third party can have any right of access to it. A married couple (together with its indeterminate fringe) is an island in the ocean. These islands at the end of the day constitute the whole society. As mentioned very early, Durkheim calls it a segmental society. Raymond Aron describes the notion succinctly: "The opposition between these two forms of solidarity [that is, mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity] is combined with the opposition between segmental societies and societies characterized by modern division of labour. One might say that a society with mechanical solidarity is also a segmental

⁴³ *Natural Symbols*, p. 188.

society; but actually the definition of these two notions is not exactly the same ... In Durkheim's terminology, a segment designates a social group into which the individuals are tightly incorporated. But a segment is also a group locally situated, relatively isolated from others, which leads its own life. The segment is characterized by a mechanical solidarity, a solidarity of resemblance; but it is also characterized by separation from the outside world. The segment is self-sufficient, it has little communication with what is outside. By definition, so to speak, segmental organization is contradictory to those general phenomena of differentiation designated by the term organic solidarity. But, according to Durkheim, in certain societies which may have very advanced forms of economic division of labour, segmental structure may still persist in part. ... The fact is that division of labour, being a derived and secondary phenomenon as we have seen, occurs at the surface of social life, and this is especially true of economic division of labour. It is skin-deep. ... Thus it is that understanding, being the highest and therefore the most superficial part of consciousness, may be rather easily modified by external influences like education, without affecting the deepest layers of psychic life.”⁴⁴

The Hong Kong Chinese society constituted by married couples differs from Durkheim's definition in several ways. Some but not all of the couples are in mechanical solidarity. Nor can organic solidarity cover all the remaining couples who are not in mechanical solidarity. There are quarrels and negotiations, deceit and complicity. Some of these couples may settle into an organic solidarity, but not all. The discursive intercourse on the form of incorporation between the couple seldom crosses the boundary of the private sphere into the public sphere. Occasionally it may, like the case of Mr. Chan. But it was leaked to the public only after a total failure, the suicide of Mrs. Chan and her murdering their two children. The case is also an example of public discourse entering the private sphere. The public furor must have been accompanied by many discursive exchanges within many Hong Kong Chinese couples. The case must have been used by the wives to warn or forewarn their husbands of the likely consequences of their actual or potential infidelity. The mass media by reporting cases like Mr. Chan provide almost regular opportunities for moral education. But it is not expected to be an effective external social control. Each couple is a segment, isolated even if it is not self-sufficient; it has communication with what is outside, but only one-way, receiving but not answering back.

Can the couple internally foster a strong solidarity? On the one hand, mechanical solidarity is not the answer, according to Durkheim. Furthermore, mechanical solidarity in the line of the female camp is an “unquestioned but always questionable” life-world, according to Schutz. Once it is questioned, there is no discursive guarantee that it will reach a conclusion in its favour. On the other hand, organic solidarity runs contrary to the gender equality principle, according to Douglas. Even if the Hong Kong Chinese wife is pursuing very hard a mechanical solidarity in the line of the female camp, her husband may fight in his last bastion, agreeing to the gender equality principle but insisting his own promiscuity. Forcing him to give up his promiscuity may drive him into the egalitarian hedonist camp, giving up his insistence on his wife's fidelity while keeping his promiscuity. Not every wife would like to see that happen, since she herself may not accept female promiscuity. Discursive intercourse is powerless, it cannot drive the husband into the female camp unless he is willing to follow his wife. The only conclusion we can arrive at seems to be that Hong Kong is a segmental society although it does not fit and is more complicated than the standard Durkheimian definition. The moral order is ineffective internally and externally, and there is an anomie. But it is not an anomie that will end after a short period of turbulence, it will last for a very long time because there is not any one discourse that can drive discursive intercourse into a definite direction. It will be a structural instability.

⁴⁴ Aron (1972), pp. 22–23.

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Table 1. Marginal distributions of constituent components of cosmologies.

	GE	FPM	FPF	SP	PB
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Male:	%	%	%	%	%
"Agree"	54.5	19.4	4.3	66.4	31.3
"No opinion"	34.6	37.0	15.2	22.3	31.8
"Disagree"	10.9	43.6	80.6	11.4	37.0
Total (N = 100%)	211	211	211	211	211
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Female:					
"Agree"	67.8	3.8	3.1	60.5	39.2
"No opinion"	20.6	15.4	12.6	22.0	26.2
"Disagree"	11.5	80.8	84.3	17.5	34.6
Total (N = 100%)	286	286	286	286	286
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Footnote:

GE = Gender equality principle;
 FPM = Fidelity parity principle (for male);
 FPF = Fidelity parity principle (for female);
 SP = Sexual pleasure principle;
 PB = Physical body principle.

Table 2. Significant cosmologies.

Cosmology	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Both male and female</u>				
* ADDAD	18	8.5	31	10.8
* ADDAA	15	7.1	61	21.3
* ADDAN	6	2.8	19	6.6
NDDAA	6	2.8	6	2.1
ADDDD	5	2.4	12	4.2
ADDNA	5	2.4	8	2.8
ANNAN	5	2.4	6	2.1
NDDAD	4	1.9	6	2.1
NDDND	4	1.9	5	1.7
<u>Male only</u>				
* NNDAN	12	5.7		
ANDAA	7	3.3		
NADAD	6	2.8		
AAAAD	5	2.4		
ANNAA	5	2.4		
NNDNN	5	2.4		
ANDAN	4	1.9		
NNDAD	4	1.9		
<u>Female only</u>				
ADDNN			11	3.8
ANNAD			8	2.8
DDDAA			7	2.4
DDDDD			7	2.4
NDDDD			7	2.4
NDDAN			6	2.1
ADDND			5	1.7
NDDNA			5	1.7
<u>Insignificant cosmologies</u>				
	95	45.0	78	28.3
Total	211	100	286	100

Footnote:

Each cosmology is denoted by five digit-places, representing the gender equality principle, the fidelity parity principle for male and female separately, the sexual pleasure principle and the physical body principle, in that order. Each digit-place admits one of the following three possibilities, namely, A ("Agree"), N ("No opinion") and D ("Disagree"). The asterisked cosmologies are those with a percentage higher than 5 per cent.

Table 3. Camps, sympathizers and independents: A re-arrangement of Table 2.

Cosmology	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
<u>The female camp (ADD??)</u>				
* ADDAA	15	7.1	61	21.3
* ADDAD	18	8.5	31	10.8
* ADDAN	6	2.8	19	6.6
ADDDD	5	2.4	12	4.2
ADDNA	5	2.4	8	2.8
ADDNN			11	3.8
ADDND			5	1.7
Subtotal	49	23.2	147	51.2
<u>The male camp (?NDA? or ?ADA?)</u>				
ANDAA	7	3.3		
ANDAN	4	1.9		
NNDAD	4	1.9		
* NNDAN	12	5.7		
NADAD	6	2.8		
Subtotal	33	15.6		
<u>Sympathizers of the female camp (NDD?? or DDD??)</u>				
NDDAD	4	1.9	6	2.1
NDDAA	6	2.8	6	2.1
NDDND	4	1.9	5	1.7
DDDA			7	2.4
DDDDD			7	2.4
NDDDD			7	2.4
NDDAN			6	2.1
NDDNA			5	1.7
Subtotal	14	6.6	47	16.7
<u>Sympathizers of the male camp (?NDN?)</u>				
NNDNN	5	2.4		
<u>The egalitarian hedonists (ANNA? or AAAA?)</u>				
ANNAN	5	2.4	6	2.1
ANNAA	5	2.4		
AAAAD	5	2.4		
ANNAD			8	2.8
Subtotal	15	7.2	14	4.9
<u>Insignificant cosmologies</u>				
	95	45.0	78	28.3
Total	211	100	286	100

Table 4. Pattern of intra-couple tensions.

Husband	Wife		
	FC	SFC	EH
FC/SFC	Mechanical solidarity	Mechanical solidarity	Protest from husband
MC/SMC	Protest from wife	Protest from wife	Protest from husband
EH	Protest from wife	Protest from wife	Mechanical solidarity

Footnote:

FC = The female camp;
 MC = The male camp;
 SFC = Sympathizers of the female camp;
 SMC = Sympathizers of the male camp;
 EH = Egalitarian hedonists.