

is dangerous to health; it has been implicated in hepatitis and probably transmits other diseases as well. Erotic **urination** may take place in or into the mouth, sometimes as an adjunct to oral sex; unlike faeces, however, fresh urine is normally sterile and thus poses no comparable health problem.

Legal aspects. In the **canon law** of the medieval church the definition of sodomy included all forms of oral sexuality, whether the partners were of opposite sexes or of the same sex, because the possibility of fecundation was excluded in both. The prosecution of participants in oral sexuality, however, has certainly been less frequent than legal action against those engaging in anal penetration, and in regard to lesbians, virtually non-existent.

While English **common law** took over many of the canon law definitions, in 1817 a court decision excluded oral sexuality from the definition of **buggery**, so that the crime was later prosecuted under other statutes such those prohibiting gross indecency, lewd and lascivious conduct, and the like. In entrapment cases, however, the unsuspecting victim of the plainclothesman's advance may have agreed to nothing more than one of the forms of oral sex in order to find himself under arrest.

In the recent Georgia case of *Bowers v. Hardwick*, which went to the United States Supreme Court (1986), the party under indictment had been accidentally observed in the act of fellating another male; the court ruled that the American legal precedents extending the right of privacy to heterosexual intercourse did not apply to sodomy.

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ORGANIZATIONS

See **Movement, Homosexual.**

ORIENTATION, SEXUAL

The expression **sexual orientation**, which came into general use only in the 1970s, denotes the stable pattern established by an individual of erotic and affectional response to others with respect to gender. Commonly two orientations, **heterosexual** and **homosexual**, are recognized; many would add **bisexual**. Attractions to sectors within the male and female populations with respect to age, race, and the like are not normally regarded as orientations, nor are such paraphilias as eroticization of **urine** and **sadomasochism** (S/M).

In comparison with older judgmental terms, such as **sexual deviation** and **perversion**, sexual orientation has the advantage of value neutrality. In comparison with the expression **sexual preference**, it emphasizes that erotic attraction stems from the deep structure of the personality, and is not a mere choice or taste which can be easily altered. Moreover, the metaphor of orientation, which originally referred to alignment according to the points of the compass, suggests the possibility of variety among individuals, rather than the rigid either/or contrast that a strict polarity of heterosexual/homosexual implies. Finally, the concept of sexual orientation conveys something of the complex interactions between the individual personality (itself made up of conscious and unconscious components), on the one hand, and the changing scripts and cues being transmitted by the social environment, on the other. One responds to a subtle "landscape of eros" as posited by society, but one does so in keeping with one's individual character and experience.

In the view of some, the expression should be altered to *affectional* orientation, to indicate a broader concern with the whole person, rather than overtly expressed erotic or genital acts. Restriction

to the specifically erotic has also been felt to be a defect of the term homosexual itself, hence the temporary popularity of the word **homophile**.

In its remote origins, the term orientation stems from architecture, where it signifies the alignment of temples and churches on an east–west axis (from *oriens*, “east”). In psychology it has come to mean awareness of one’s position or direction with reference to time, place, or identity of persons; also it denotes a tendency to move toward a source of stimulation or a particular direction, as in tropisms. From this nexus it is but a short step to the concept of *sexual* orientation. The widespread adoption of the expression is related to the 1970s popularity of such compounds as action-oriented, identity-oriented, and success-oriented. It is possible that the semantic modulation into the erotic sphere was anticipated by the late-nineteenth-century German use, with respect to sex, of the term *Richtung*, “direction.”

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ORIGIN MYTHS

See *Inventor Legends*.

ORPHEUS

Greek mythological figure, the son of the muse Calliope, noted for his magical art in music and poetry. Whether Orpheus was a historical personality is disputed, but if so he lived in the generation before the Trojan War, therefore in the thirteenth century B.C.

Orpheus in Antiquity. A number of important aspects of the career of Orpheus are recounted by ancient Greek writers. Of Thracian origin, Orpheus possessed musical skill that could enchant animals and plants and cause them to do his will. Trees would transplant themselves for him, while birds and even fish gathered to hear his song. As a member of the expedition of the Argonauts, he beat time for the rowers and stilled harsh winds.

When his wife Eurydice died of the bite of a poisonous snake and was taken to Hades, Orpheus obtained her release by giving a concert for the ruler of the Underworld. Warned not to look at Euridice on the trip home, Orpheus yielded to temptation and lost her forever. Orpheus then gathered around him a group of Thracian young men, to whom he introduced the new practice of **pederasty**. Greek vase paintings show this ephebic entourage enchanted by the splendors of his song. Yet Orpheus’ influence provoked resentment among the forsaken female companions of his new lovers. The women—sometimes identified with the maenads of the Dionysiac cult—ganged up on him, attacking the musician with spears, axes, and stones. Orpheus was dismembered, his head separated from the rest. Eventually the head floated away, still singing, together with his lyre. Orpheus’ head washed ashore on the island of Lesbos, where it received the honor of a shrine. The shrine could still be visited in ancient times, and reputedly the head might be heard faintly singing. Some scribes claimed to have taken down the words, which then presumably provided the texts for the Orphic hymns. Around these hymns developed a religious cult, Orphism, whose role and significance are still the object of debate by historians.

Most images of Orpheus in Greek and Roman art are either representative depictions of him as singer or dramatic scenes of his later career—his leadership of the male band in Thrace, his death, and the survival of the head. These last events were important to the Greeks not only because they laid the foundation for his influence after death, but because he was regarded as the **inventor** of pederasty. Although he was not the only candidate for this honor, his nomination reflects the Greek penchant for attributing significant cultural achievements to particular individuals. The Eurydice episode, which in modern consciousness has become virtually synonymous with Orpheus, was less important to the Greeks, and may