

# A NOTE ON THE TRANSGENDER ISSUE

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A tiny minority of people suffers from what is known as "gender dysphoria," a condition in which one's internal sense of one's sex does not match the sex of one's body. They believe they are a male in a female body or a female in a male body, which unsurprisingly results in anxiety and distress. The cause of the condition is unknown.

The prevailing view of the elites in current Western culture is that one's inner sense of one's sex is inviolable. It must be taken as definitive of the person's sex so that the only option for easing the dissonance between the body and mind is to feminize or masculinize the body by dressing it up with culturally prescribed indicators of sex, altering it surgically, and dousing it with chemicals.

The very notion of a male or female inner being in isolation from a body is vacuous because there are no objective criteria for a male or female inner being. Some personality traits are more common in men and others more common in women, the distribution varying across cultures, but there are no personality traits that are definitive of men and women. Even sexual attraction to one of the same biological sex does not define one as a member of the opposite sex, as homosexuals are quick to make clear. So people who insist the sex of their inner being is at odds with that of their body are not expressing an objective reality; they are expressing a subjective sense derived from their acceptance of a sexual stereotype that unjustifiably defines maleness and femaleness in terms of certain personality traits. In tackling the pain of their dissonance, there is no reason to treat that subjective sense as a fact, let alone as an unalterable fact.

There are other cases where inward perceptions do not match biological facts, such as anorexia, body integrity identity disorder, and species dysphoria, and yet in those cases we do not allow the perceptions to dictate how the body is treated. The emaciated anorexic is not reassured that she is in fact overweight and allowed to continue starving herself to death; the person with BIID is not told he would in fact be fulfilled without one of his healthy limbs and allowed to have it amputated; and the person suffering from species dysphoria is not treated like an animal and encouraged to modify his body to conform to his inner beast.

In those cases, we accept as obvious that the problem is not with the person's normal and healthy body but with his inner, incongruent sense of identity. There is no justification for privileging one's inner perception of one's sex and pronouncing it immune from the distortions recognized in other body-mind conflicts. As in those other cases, one should attempt to bring nonconforming sexual perceptions into line with the biological facts rather than insist they are a fundamental and unalterable aspect of the person's identity and being. By sanctifying an incongruous perception of sex, one limits the sufferer's means of relief to changing the sex of his or her body. That is a fraudulent and cruel prescription because, despite cultural assurances to the contrary, the sex of one's body cannot be changed. One can undergo surgery and induce certain

physiological changes through hormone treatments, but the result is a mutilated and drug-soaked body of the original sex not a body of the opposite sex.

Dr. Paul McHugh is a Harvard-trained psychiatrist who served for 26 years as the Henry Phipps Professor of Psychiatry and director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the prestigious Johns Hopkins Medical School, the institution where so-called "sex-reassignment surgery" was pioneered in America. He currently is the University Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins. He has written (see [here](#)):

"Sex change" is biologically impossible. People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women. Claiming that this is [a] civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Some who reject the claim that one's inner sense of one's sex is inviolable, who agree it is possible and acceptable to alter that inner sense, still insist that "sex-reassignment surgery" is a moral option when that effort fails, and they sometimes assert that Christians have no biblical basis for objecting to the procedure in that circumstance. I disagree with that assertion.

The Bible indicates throughout that male and female are classifications based on the facts of biology. When God commanded that "every male" (כָּל־זָכָר) in Abraham's household was to be circumcised (Gen. 17:10), he equated being a male with being circumcisable and thus with having a penis, the sex organ that is the object of circumcision. In requiring the Jews to circumcise every newborn male on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12, 21:4; Lev. 12:3), in setting different times of uncleanness following the birth of a male and female child (Lev. 12:2, 5), and in including in the census of Levites only males from the age of one month (Num. 3:15), God required his people to determine whether a child was male or female at or soon after birth. Since that determination could be made only by the infant's genitalia, God implicitly designated genitalia as the criterion of maleness and femaleness.<sup>2</sup> The sex of a child is apparent at birth (e.g., Gen. 21:7, 29:34, 30:19-20, 35:16-17; Ruth 4:17; 1 Sam. 4:20; Lk. 1:57) precisely because it is biology that is determinative; inner perceptions are not a factor.

Scripture not only indicates that God defines male and female biologically, it also makes clear it is sinful for a person to act contrary to that biologically-defined sex. Thus, God prohibits a woman, one having a female body, from dressing like a man and prohibits a man, one having a male body, from dressing like a woman (Deut. 22:5). He calls it an abomination. He also prohibits all homosexual conduct, all conduct in which males or females act contrary to their biological sex by coupling sexually with a member of their own sex (see [The Bible and](#)

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<sup>1</sup> See also, Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, "Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences," *The New Atlantis*, retrieved on 2/18/19 from <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/executive-summary-sexuality-and-gender>.

<sup>2</sup> The exceedingly rare condition of biologically intersexed people, those suffering from what is more technically termed "disorder of sex development" (DSD), is a red herring in this context. The subject of discussion is those with normal male or female bodies whose internal sense of their sex does not match the sex of their body. A "eunuch from birth" (Mat. 19:12) is "a human male who, without a physical operation, is by nature incapable of begetting children" (BDAG, 409). It is one born with male genitalia that do not become functional for procreation.

[Homosexual Conduct](#)). This too he labels an abomination (Lev. 18:22). If people are required by God to respect their biological sex to the extent it is abominable for them to dress or behave sexually in a way that is contrary to it, then certainly they are required to respect their biological sex to the extent they are forbidden from seeking to alter it through surgery and the application of chemicals. The last is the most drastic assault on one's sex, a physical attack on the body that defines sex.

Accordingly, those who dress or behave sexually in a way that is contrary to their biological sex or attempt to alter that sex by physical means are sinning. If they are Christians, they lovingly need to be convicted of their wrong. If they have already had surgery and hormone treatments, they need to acknowledge their sin in doing so, cease any further efforts to "transition," return to living in conformity with their biological sex, and undo the effects of the sex-reassignment treatment to the extent that is possible.

As long as they are penitent, the church needs to bear with them and to help them through their struggle to live out their commitment to Christ and to find peace with their biological sex. But the church cannot in some misguided sense of compassion encourage or facilitate rejection of one's biological sex.<sup>3</sup> As Robert Gagnon has said (see [here](#)), "The church's complicity in sexual delusion benefits no one, least of all the offender." It is more loving to call one to live in the strain of submission than to promote whatever relief may come from rebellion. On "that Day" that fact will be clear to all.

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<sup>3</sup> This includes addressing a man who thinks he is a woman by his chosen female name and using feminine pronouns in reference to him and addressing a woman who thinks she is a man by her chosen male name and using masculine pronouns in reference to her. I agree with Robert Gagnon (see [here](#)) that doing so would be "a scandal to the church, an accommodation to sin that God finds abhorrent, and a complicity in the offender's self-dishonoring behavior that does him no favor."