

From Transgender to Transhuman: A Manifesto on the Freedom of Form

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Preface to the 2nd Edition

During the fifteen years since *The Apartheid of Sex* was published, I've come to realize that choosing one's gender is merely an important subset of choosing one's form. By "form" I mean that which encloses our beingness – flesh for the life we are accustomed to, plastic for the robots of science fiction, mere data for the avatars taking over our computer screens. I came to this realization by understanding that 21st century software made it technologically possible to separate our minds from our bodies. This can be accomplished by downloading enough of our neural connection contents and patterns into a sufficiently advanced computer, and merging the resultant "mindfile" with sufficiently advanced software – call it "mindware." Once such a download and merger is complete, we would have chosen a new form – software -- although we would be the same person. It would be quite like when I completed changing my gender from male to female. I had chosen a new form although I was still the same person. Hours can be spent debating whether or not a mind made of software can ever be the same as a mind based in flesh. We won't know the answer until the experiment is done. My view is that as the mindfiles become increasingly complete, and as the mindware becomes increasingly sophisticated, the software-based mind will be as close to the flesh-based mind as the flesh-based mind is to itself over the course of one's life. In other words, I believe that our self is a characteristic visualization of the world and pattern of responding to it, including emotions. Because visions and patterns are really information, I think our selves can be expressed as faithfully in software as they are in our brains. We can clone ourselves in software without copying every single memory because we see ourselves as a pattern of awareness, feeling and response, not as an encyclopedia of memories. In *The Apartheid of Sex* I explained that being transgendered was adjusting one's gender appearance to match their mental gender state. To be transgendered one had to be willing to disregard societal rules that require gender appearance to conform to acceptable appearances for one of two legal sexes, which, in turn, always depends upon gross sexual anatomy. To be transgendered one has to accept that they have a unique sexual identity, beyond either male or female, and that this unique mental gender state cannot be happily expressed as either rigidly male or female. It requires a unique, transgendered expression. In a similar fashion I now see that it is also too constraining for there to be but two legal forms, human and non-human. There can be limitless variations of forms from fully fleshed to purely software, with bodies and minds being made up of all degrees of electronic circuitry between. To be transhuman one has to be willing to accept that they have a unique personal identity, beyond flesh or software, and that this unique personal identity cannot be happily expressed as either human or not. It requires a unique, transhuman expression. In *The Apartheid of Sex* I contended that each of us have many genders within us but feel inhibited from expressing them. I

argued that we would feel happier, and that society would be enriched, if we could all feel free to express multiple genders during our life. I now see that in addition we each have multiple non-gendered visions of ourselves. We can imagine ourselves as chimera, as fantasia and as tweaked versions of our own persona. The popularity of role-playing games evidences the joy such freedom of forms gives us. The societal ethic in favor of people transforming themselves via education, fitness, travel, fellowship and work evidences the benefits to us all of being freed from a single, static self. The word “apartheid” means a forced, legal separation of people based on some characteristic that is irrelevant to their personhood, with the purpose of subjugating one or more of the separated groups. The word first arose in South Africa to describe their legal regime of separating people by skintone so as to subjugate all but those of European ancestry. For example, it was illegal for people of different skintones to marry and people’s presumed race was stamped on their ID cards. A few years after apartheid was abolished in South Africa I used the term to describe the worldwide system of forced, legal separation of people based on their gross sexual anatomy – “the apartheid of sex.” Fifteen years later women are still subjugated worldwide, although progress is being made in some places. The worst opprobrium continues to fall upon those transgendered souls who are courageous enough to deny with their own bodies the legitimacy of the apartheid concept. I have decided to publish this Second Edition to both continue building momentum against labeling people as male or female, and to ignite action against an incipient new “apartheid of form.” I believe we are on the threshold of creating humanity and personhood outside of DNA-driven flesh bodies. We have an opportunity to prevent the creation of a new oppressed class of persons – the transhumans – before such “us versus them” thinking gets culturally embedded, as was the case for millennia-old gender and ethnic oppression. My hope is that the logic of freedom of gender can inform a recognizing of freedom of form. Hence, each chapter of this book consists of a lightly edited version of the corresponding chapter from *The Apartheid of Sex*, plus some comparative observations relevant to transhumanism. A new final chapter summarizes the progress that has been made since 1996 in peeling back the apartheid of sex and also propels us forward into welcoming a new diversity of human forms.

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