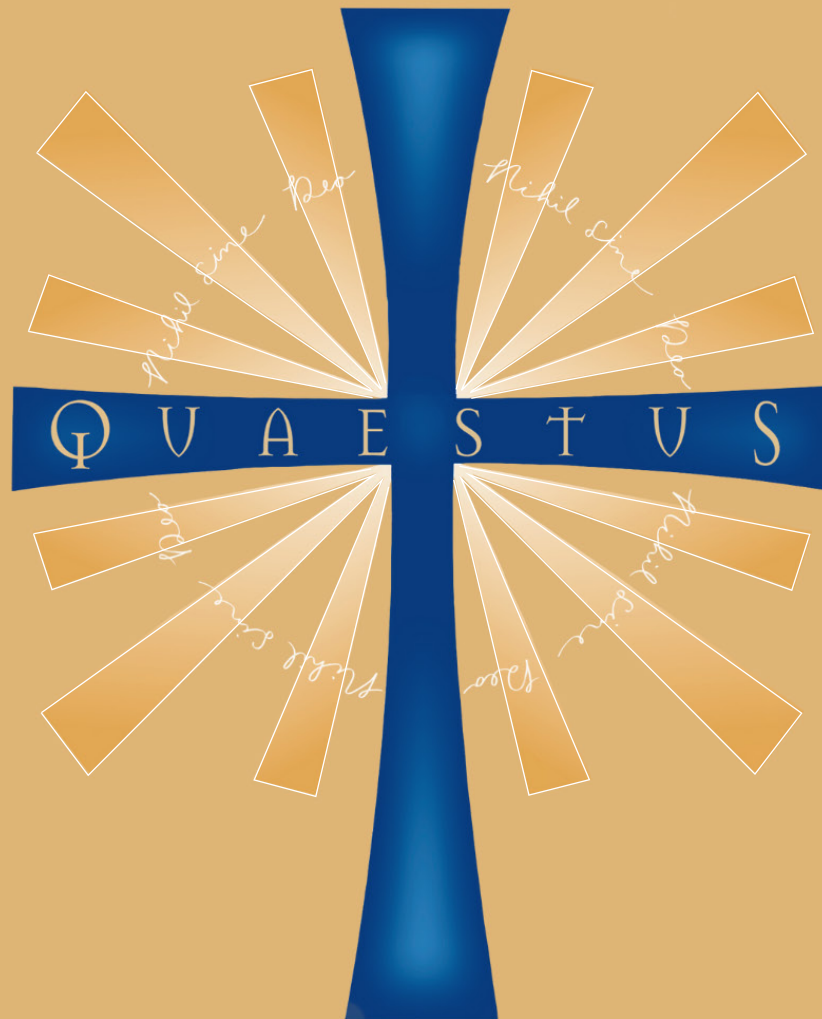


# QUAESTUS

LIBERTY | FAITH | ECONOMICS



CHRISTIANITY & CAPITALISM:  
VOLUME V NO. III

SPRING 2024



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# *Our Mission*

*Quaestus is a student-led journal presenting ideas about Liberty, Faith, and Economics from a Christian perspective in order to promote human flourishing.*

# *Our Vision*

*We aim to inspire the next generation of Christian thought and leaders by addressing global issues with sound moral and economic principles.*

*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*

*Mark 8:36*

# *Editorial Board*



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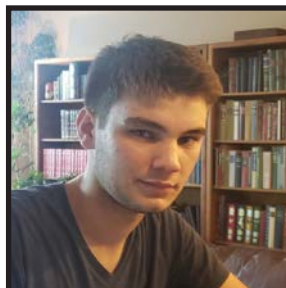
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# So... What is Quaestus?

## *A Letter from the Editor*

The following periodical includes transcriptions from the 2023 Liberty, Faith, and Economics (LFE) Summit at Concordia Wisconsin. This event is run by the Concordia Free Enterprise Center in association with the Acton Institute, an American think tank which focuses on religion and liberty. The summit is held annually and has drawn numerous high-profile speakers including this year's keynote, Scott Walker. The focus of this year's LFE summit was the compatibility of Christianity and capitalism. A second periodical will be published in the spring including student and faculty articles related to this topic.

Quaestus (*Kway-stus*) is a group for students who want to get people talking on important topics. Together, we form an editorial board of undergraduate and graduate students who are advised by Dr. Scott Niederjohn and Dr. Daniel Sem. We run two writing contests, one in the fall and one in the spring. Student editors are either chosen from the winners of these contests or invited by the current editorial board after demonstrating writing ability.

### **Quaestus Serves Two Main Functions**

First: we publish two periodicals a year, one each semester. The fall periodical involves transcriptions from speakers at CUW's annual Liberty, Faith, and Economics summit. The spring periodical includes articles by students, faculty, and Quaestus editors. Any CUW student or faculty member can publish articles through Quaestus, although they must be accepted and peer-reviewed by the editorial board. The idea is that people can read the fall periodical for inspiration, then write articles for the spring periodical based on the themes of the one from the fall. Themes generally relate to free speech, economics, healthcare, and politics.

Second: we develop and lead forums to promote conversations on contentious topics. Our general model is to select one or more experts to speak on an issue. If we can, we will invite speakers with opposing perspectives. Our speakers will present publicly on the topic, demonstrating to the student audience that a healthy and productive conversation on this topic is possible. Students always get a chance to question our speakers at the end of the forum. In the past we have led forums on racial relations, *Roe v. Wade*, educational issues, climate change, transgender ideology, and the like.

For the members of the editorial board, Quaestus serves as an excellent opportunity to practice writing, editing, and publication. There are also opportunities to interact with leading experts in various fields, as well as chances to attend and present at national and international conferences.

Ultimately our goal as an institution is to practice fruitful conversations and careful thought. Quaestus, which means profit in Latin, emphasizes ideas that are profitable for us to be thinking about and discussing. As you read the following articles, we hope you will be inspired by them into further questioning of our world, conversations about truth, and perhaps even to step into publication yourself.

Harrison Hulse,  
Editor in Chief

# Understanding the Struggle Against Pornography

Written by: Eleanor Mroczenski, Senior Editor



In a free market, agents can advertise, sell products, and support charitable causes as they desire, within legal limits. Presently, the advertisements, products, and donations of companies reflect the growing shift in American culture and society away from a Christian worldview. A primary example of this is the pornography industry, which 70% of 18- to 30-year-old US citizen admit to consuming at least once a month (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). Christians consider the usage of pornography a sin, as the sixth commandment condemns adultery, which includes pornography as “everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27). Nevertheless, pornography remains highly prevalent, even when coupled with natural consequences. Pornography is shown to fit the framework of addiction in neurobiological studies, and it is found to effect relationships and wellbeing. Married Americans who watch pornography – no matter the frequency – are twice as likely to experience divorce (Perry, 2018). One study found that those who view pornography more frequently are 17% more likely to report emotional abuse, and this same study predicted that pornography usage also corresponds to higher levels low-self-esteem and depression (Spadine et al., 2022). Thus, by reason from the natural consequences and by faith and adherence to the commands of the law, the Christian worldview opposes pornography and can support this opposition through extrabiblical evidence and logic. The moral and social implications of the pornography pandemic transcend religious beliefs. However, estimated to make \$10 billion to \$14 billion annual revenue in the United

States as of 2001, the pornography industry is a stubborn reality of the American free market landscape (Rich, 2001). Therefore, Christians must go beyond passively holding an ethical or philosophical stance on pornography to respond to this crisis on economic, political, and spiritual levels with boycotts, legislative support, and the gospel.

As an agent within the free market, economic measures like boycotts can allow Christians to oppose the pornography industry through individual choices. While a Christian paradigm opposes the usage of pornography, a study of American evangelicals revealed an increase in reported pornography viewership “at rates identical to other Americans” (Perry & Cyrus, 2018). Therefore, as 64% of Americans are Christian as of 2020, the elimination of pornography from Christians lives would significantly detract from the consumer base and impact revenue (Pew Research Center, 2022). However, one could question whether that change would be enough to affect this mammoth industry, especially when Christians are not the target consumers. Yet if done with media coverage targeted towards one high-profile company, boycotts can cause drops in stock prices that further incentivize companies to change (King, 2017). Quantitative historical research suggests that only 3.5% of a population needs to participate in active and sustained protests and boycotts for change to occur (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Thus, if done with high publicity and open support, boycotts could be effective methods to at least raise awareness of the anti-pornography movement and at best implement substantive change. While Christians may ideally



desire the elimination of the pornography industry altogether, the most attainable measures to curb the problem involve limitations and changes to implement content and age restrictions. Thus, public boycotts and poor press can achieve revenue and public relations impacts large enough to affect change in the pornography industry, as well as other industries contrary to Christian worldviews.

Through vocal economic resistance, Christians can influence political change, but how does one articulate the problem to a broad audience? And what specific changes should be advocated? The arguments for further legislation about pornography, whether prohibited or regulated, may be colored by religious perspectives, but they should be presented as an argument against vices for public safety and wellbeing. Establishing a line of reasoning that appeals to the data and to American morals will persuade both those inside and outside of Christianity of the need for change, providing a broader base of support. Although the Bible explicitly condemns the adultery and lust that is pornography, even those unfamiliar with the law have “requirements of the law written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness” (Romans 2:15). Thus, one can recognize the dangers of pornography and the need for further legislation, whether they are Christian or not. Therefore, Christians must reveal the dangers of pornography to constituents and political leaders, trusting that their reason and consciences will recognize the truth of the Word, even if it is not directly presented.

With the problem defined to a general audience in a non-religious context, Christians can take further steps to support specific legislature. One can clearly establish that pornography contains and causes issues, yet there are matters with the First Amendment and censorship to be reckoned with. Under the First Amendment, obscenity is not protected. Obscenity generally refers to “lewd, filthy, or disgusting words or pictures,” but determining whether something is obscene is not so easy (Esmaili (Ed.), 2017).

Currently, the Miller test, established by *Miller v. California*, is the current test for obscenity. It evaluates whether the work appeals to “prurient interest” when “contemporary community standards” are applied; “whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law”; and “whether the work, ‘taken as a whole,’ lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value” (Esmaili (Ed.), 2017). When applied to pornography, it does not condemn the industry as a whole. By the current definitions from the Miller test, the First Amendment does not protect child pornography nor pornography deemed obscene, which does not directly include violence (Hudson, 2009). Thus, Christians can support legislation that seeks to further reign in what is considered obscene in the context of pornography given its known consequences. Opponents argue that broadening the definition of obscenity to include the majority of pornography leads to censorship of ideas, which are not in and of themselves illegal, even if they are regarding topics that are “immoral, sinful, or even illegal” (Arthur, 2019). While censorship is a risk, one must recognize that these ideas model a reality. Nonetheless, the argument for a broader definition of obscenity to regulate content and distribution can become quickly muddled, and a political approach that advocates regulations regarding age restrictions is more feasible and effective.

Presently, some of these age regulations are coming into effect in states like Texas, Utah, and Louisiana, among others. Louisiana House Bill no. 142 was passed in 2022, and it holds internet pornography companies liable if they “fail to perform reasonable age verification methods to verify the age of individuals attempting to access the material” with some form of government ID (ACT No. 440, 2022). With age verification in place, “according to Ethical Capital Partners, the private equity company that owns Pornhub, [website] traffic in Louisiana has dropped 80 percent” (Novicoff, 2023). In other states with such laws, Pornhub stopped operations altogether (Novicoff, 2023). While these matters do not prohibit pornography, they reduce availability to



minors and provide extra steps of identification that are added inconveniences, which discourages use from those who are legally able to view it. Moreover, by reducing availability, price correspondingly increase, which provides yet another obstacle to access. Age regulations also discourage the development of chronic users from youth, making people less likely to seek out or habitually use pornography later in life. While the free market and the First Amendment prevent pornography from being prohibited, Christians can support laws that limit access and discourage use. One can do so by contacting their representatives and vocally advocating for regulations to spread awareness and support. In short, while American Christianity exists within a free market, there are regulations that can be put in place for public safety and wellbeing, which individuals can support through their vote and voice.

While these economic and political actions are central to a Christian response to the pornography industry, they are founded in a larger social and spiritual response. Christians must first extend grace and forgiveness to their neighbours who use pornography, recognizing that humans are born with concupiscence and are bound to sin under the Law (Kolb & Wengert, 2000). Only through the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit can one experience justification through Jesus Christ and subsequent freedom from the weight of sin. As Paul says in his letter to the Romans, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2). Thus, in an increasingly post-Christian society, many remain in what philosopher Søren Kierkegaard labels the aesthetic stage, where oneself and one’s desires and pleasures become the primary purpose of life (Melchert & Morrow, 2019). These pursuits only provide temporary fulfilment, leaving one empty and constantly turning back to vices. Such a diagnosis is apt for a society enslaved to sin and addicted to pornography. As the aesthetic stage is normalized and sexual freedom crusaded, pornography also takes on an element of the ethical stage, where one seeks to

construct themselves out of “right” and “wrong” decisions (Melchert & Morrow, 2019). As groups deem the Church and “purity culture” oppressive, social value is added to promiscuous, risk-taking behaviors, and one may initially indulge in these things because they are deemed normal or even twistedly moral. Thereby, Christians should extend grace to those stuck in Kierkegaard’s aesthetic and ethical stages because they understand how original sin enslaves and condemns all of mankind.

To fill the emptiness left by the aesthetic and ethical stages, Christians must respond to pornography with the Gospel, fulfilling Kierkegaard’s final stage: the religious stage. Here, one fully accepts the weight of the Law, which man cannot bear, because that weight is carried by Jesus’s death and resurrection (Melchert & Morrow, 2019). When one is in a relationship with God, purpose is found in knowing God and serving Him because of His grace and sacrifice. Therefore, the Gospel changes hearts, and with the Holy Spirit, there is a desire to obey the Lord’s commandments and the strength to do so. Only with the sharing of the Gospel can hearts be changed and true purpose be received, so naturally, the Christian response to pornography, or any sinful behavior, begins with the cross. In love and obedience Christians respond to pornography, recognizing that the problems pornography seeks to fill can only be fixed with Christ.

Ultimately, Christians should address pornography through both non-religious and religious lenses. Appealing to science and reason to make a case against pornography, Christians can gain support from non-believers who recognize this moral crisis. With added support, vocal boycotting and encouraging of legislature for age regulation and verification can be substantively more effective and persuasive. Yet a Christian also recognizes that this social problem boils down to a spiritual one – the need for the Gospel. Therefore, as Christians share the good news in word and deed, they influence individuals and provide opportunities for the Holy

Spirit to change hearts. The economic and political responses to pornography seek to curb vices and their consequences while still operating within a free-market economy and respecting individual liberty, and the religious response desires salvation and freedom for all from sin. Both realities must be a part of the Christian approach to any agent in the free market who advertises, sells products, and supports charitable causes which oppose the Christian worldview. Thus, by responding in both the earthly and spiritual kingdoms, Christians can care for the nation through worldly means and can extend the love of Jesus Christ to individual souls. On an individual level, no matter the issue faced in a world muddled with sin, Christians can turn to the clarity and truth of Scripture to recognize sin and problems and be comforted by the grace of God.

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naked-capitalists.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/magazine/naked-capitalists.html)

# Christianity and Capitalism: an Intersection at the Ethical

Written by: Ambrose Shaltanis, Senior Editor



It is nearly universally agreed upon in the political sphere that Western civilization and its instilled values are on the decline in America. This is measurable on account of a multitude of symptoms. Depression, suicide, and drug usage are all increasing, while simultaneously religious engagement is at an all-time low.<sup>1</sup> War has been declared on traditional morality, and opponents rise to meet these perpetrators of decline in battle. Two of the most prominent conservative figures of the modern era, Tucker Carlson and Ben Shapiro, had one of the more productive discussions regarding this influx of societal change.<sup>2</sup> The pivotal question that surrounds their discourse lies at the cause of said decline. Tucker and Shapiro are at odds in their diagnoses of this cause, wherein the latter argues from a spiritual perspective, and the former argues from an economic. This invokes a debate on the intersection between capitalism and social values, which provokes three important questions: What is the real cause of societal disorder? Are there cases where it is necessary to impose a curb on a specific facet of economics? Are the effects of capitalism able to be reconciled with a Christian worldview? I believe the answer to these questions lies within the ethical, which leads to

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1        3 pieces of research documenting said decline. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9483000/>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8129846/>  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>

2        The Ben Shapiro Show Sunday Special Ep. 26. <https://youtu.be/G1UpFHsbOf0?si=nIwU1t6f-Hj3goI4b>

my thesis. Capitalism is unique due to the lack of ethical impositions prescribed by the natural laws of the economy, causing it to align with Christianity more than any other system does. In order to reflect on this conclusion, some background should be established, first on the positions of the relevant commentators, and second, on what capitalism itself is.

In their conversation, Ben Shapiro describes the modest and reasonable position that the decline of society flows downstream from a decline of spirituality and Judeo-Christian values. Shapiro argues that capitalism has brought immense prosperity to the modern world. Despite this success, despite the fact that middle class men live better than most kings of previous centuries, the social discontent still perseveres, meaning it must find its root outside the realm of the materialism that capitalism brings. This is certainly an easy pill to swallow for Christians, and Christians are absolutely correct in pointing to a neglect for the precepts instituted by God Himself as a catalyst for the decay of Western civilization. It is sound theologically and philosophically as well. As the German philosopher Ludvig Wittgenstein succinctly explains “No cry of torment can be greater than the cry of one man. Or again, no torment can be greater than what a single human being may suffer. A man is capable of infinite torment therefore, and so too he can stand in need of infinite help.”<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein brilliantly summarizes the problem and the solution. We are capable of suffering, capable of infinite torment due to the human condition. This leads to a disquietude that only can be filled by an infinite substance, ergo

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3        Wittgenstein, L, Culture and Value, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 45e

God. If God is the only one who can properly fill our depravity, then a return to spiritual values that rely on something external with an objective set of morality is the solution to the grievances that plague society.

Tucker Carlson, on the other hand, took a more provocative approach to the cause of decline. He argued that unchecked capitalism can not only lead to economic crises in certain situations, but also be the cause of the social stagnation that Shapiro describes. His reasoning in context comes from his belief that the auto industry should not progress to exclusively relying on automation, resulting in the displacement of over four million jobs. He pointed to evidence that shows that some principles of economics result in factors of decline that he and Shapiro are interested in stopping. He says:

“When male wages decline below those of females, marriage formation declines along with it, but childbirth does not, in other words, we are hardwired to impregnate, that continues, and the net effect is that you have no families, and more kids, especially boys, growing up in fatherless homes, which all but guarantees that you repeat the process, so you have the disintegration of the family because of an economic factor.”<sup>4</sup>

Tucker would indicate that the effects of capitalism (in this case the productivity increase of doubling the effective workforce) necessitate unfavorable outcomes such as a rise in fatherless homes.

This is not an unprecedented response either, as there are plenty of other reasons to believe that the progress that capitalism demands causes other aspects of social anxiety. The rise of progress and technological innovations is apparently moving at an unstoppable pace. Automation is growing, not only in the auto industry as Tucker fears, but in a majority of white collar jobs as well, with artificial intelligence threatening to

<sup>4</sup> The Ben Shapiro Show Sunday Special Ep. 26. *ibid*

overtake many technologically oriented tasks.<sup>5</sup> This automation cannot easily be halted either. As one conservative commentator explains, “Even if many of the tech executives themselves have valid concerns about their long term consequences, the rat race toward increasingly sophisticated technologies can’t be halted. The same mechanism of ruthless competition that delivers to us these great services is also the reason those technologies which maybe shouldn’t exist will still be pursued.”<sup>6</sup> If one corporation or government were to curb their own innovation, it would only concede an advantage to their competitor. This competition that once led to bountiful mutual benefits in the public sector now is enslaved to a society of collective selfishness. This is the essence of the fears which grip Tucker. In an effort to halt this production that he believes will lead to disastrous results, he argues that certain impositions must be made for the sake of the economy, putting him in contrast with Shapiro.

The two worldviews now collide. While they started from the same circumstances and aim to end at a common goal, their methodology differs drastically. They both believe in an ethical structure that will reverse the decline, but their contentions with each other lie in where they place this ethical structure.

At this contention point, the proper usage of the ethical is of utmost importance. The ethical branch of philosophy deals with moral principles and how to know them. Shapiro believes that these moral principles come from spirituality, and thus a return to tradition will cause them to be reinstated. Tucker thinks that the economy as it is naturally leads to an output of moral principles, and thus restrictions on the economy will alter those outputs, leading to more favorable moral principles. While they both have cause for their respective beliefs, perhaps the best answer lies in a synthesis of the

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/reports-and-data/AI-Employment-brief-2021.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> 1791. Anonymous, (Ben Sixsmith?) 2019: [https://youtu.be/3JIWwDW\\_OzA?si=Rv9sueey-tA38-jrY](https://youtu.be/3JIWwDW_OzA?si=Rv9sueey-tA38-jrY)



two: an imposition of the ethical that is placed after the laws of the economy take place. This means that if alterations are going to be made to the economy, they must be done by those inside the capitalist structure, not by those attempting to change it from the outside.

Capitalism as a structure of society is the key to the debate. A free market economy has proven to materially increase production and wealth far more than any other economic system, but beyond that, it is fundamentally separate from all other schools of economic thought.

Socialism, communism, mercantilism and the like all are reactionary theories. They recognize a problem within a society and aim to correct it through interference with the economy. Without government regulation, the economy is beholden to certain laws, an invisible hand which guides it to natural ends. These laws wait for no man, and a free market economy exemplified in capitalism is the most efficient way to allow these natural laws to run free. The other forms of economic structure result from governments composed of flawed people who desire to impose their set of ethics upon the natural laws of the economy in order to warp it to their desired outcome. Capitalism is set apart by the very fact that any ethical regulation must be placed after the fact. Another prominent political commentator, Jonah Goldberg, uses this idea in fact to criticize capitalism. "...Capitalism has its limits. It creates wealth, but is utterly silent about what should be done with that wealth."<sup>1</sup> This is precisely the strength of capitalism. It is a force of nature that acts only to the object of its end goal. It has no ethical imposition, allowing men to live how they choose, be it morally or immorally.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek notes an underlying feature to these other economic theories, which he calls "Cynicism". Cynicism to him is something that "recognizes the particular interest behind the ideological universality, the

1 Goldberg, Jonah. *The Limits of Capitalism*, (National Review), 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalreview.com/author/jonah-goldberg/>

distance between the ideological mask and the reality, but it still finds reasons to retain the mask. This cynicism is not a direct position of immorality, it is more like morality itself put in the service of immorality...the cynical reaction consists in saying that legal enrichment is a lot more effective and, moreover, protected by law."<sup>2</sup> In Žižek's model, the cynic acknowledges the charade of a certain system, but uses legal regulations to uphold it regardless. Žižek is not the only one who realizes the war between morality and immorality occurring in the background. Luther also advocated for government intervention when necessary. "Luther called on the people of his day to nip the monopolistic spirit in the bud – and if an individual couldn't or wouldn't control his or her own propensity to sin in this regard Luther called on the government to check the sin via regulation and law."<sup>3</sup>

There is a key difference between the way the two figures see the role the government has in capitalism. The cynicism which Žižek describes is a feature which is exclusive to reactionary theories, notably not capitalism. Žižek criticizes capitalism as the immorality that is upheld by leaders who recognize its flaws. While Žižek may attempt to critique capitalism with his ideology, his distinction in actuality serves to prove why capitalism functions properly: precisely because it is not beholden to his cynicism. His cynicism only happens when there is a direct imposition on the economic system, which does not occur in the purest form of a free market. Likewise Luther only takes issue with a specific outcome of capitalism, but not the system itself. Every position that Luther has on the flaws of capitalism can also be pushed back to a deeper, root, problem that absolves capitalism by leaving it alone as an economic structure.

While a proper institution of an ethical structure is required for a return to traditional morality, it must be placed correctly. Tucker is

2 Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (Verso, NY: 1989). 26.

3 Mobley, Van. "Economic Systems, Vocation, and Human Flourishing from a Lutheran Perspective", June 2021.



wrong in his conclusion. Free market capitalism is the economic system where the natural laws of the economy precede the ethical. By tampering with this ordered state of affairs, governments and bureaucracies set the stage for disastrous economic catastrophe. If humanity stands in need of infinite help according to Wittgenstein, who is he to impose his will over natural laws? Capitalism is capable of leading to severe consequences, but these consequences are not the fault of the system itself. They are a result of the warped moral compass that dwells within all men. If Tucker and Shapiro wish to solve these problems that reside within capitalism, they must do so by acknowledging the place of ethics. If restrictions are imposed on capitalism, they must necessarily be given for the right reasons. If competition is to be halted, it must be halted due to the morality which drives corporations and individuals, not by governments who impose their will on the entire society. By governments doing so, they create a disorder contrary to nature. This imbalance does not solve the problems implied by this view of capitalism. At best it postpones them, at worst amplifies them. Morality has a place within the economy, but it cannot precede the natural laws that lie within it.

As alluded to above, by virtue of its accordance with natural order, capitalism is inherently moral. Its branch of naturalism emphasizes free will and incentivizes acting virtuously. American historian Forrest McDonald writes concerning 18th century America “There was only one legitimate way by which they could [become wealthy], and that was by practicing republican and/or puritanical virtues: frugality, temperance, prudence, and industry.”<sup>4</sup> The selfishness which causes imbalances in the economy is a result of man’s nature, not capitalism itself. The natural laws of capitalism are participatory in the natural order which is ordained by God, acting only to its end which God set in place.

In conclusion, I can now offer answers to the original questions asked. While both a decline  
4 McDonald, Forrest. *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (University Press of Kansas: 1985). 100

in spirituality and some adverse effects of capitalism contribute to the real cause of societal disorder, it is a marriage between the two which causes it. It is the fallen morals acting upon the economy, which result from a decline in traditional western values, that interfere with the natural order. The fault lies in those who warp the economy instead of changing their own ethical compass.

Are there cases where it is necessary to impose a curb on a specific facet of economics? Research certainly seems to indicate that pure unchecked progress may result in catastrophe. If there is a curb to certain technological advances, however, it must be done by those institutions leading the race to progress. An intervention by a government upends the ethical structure, which only results in making the problem worse.

Finally, given capitalism’s relationship with natural order and allowance of man’s morality and free will to be the guiding light by which it functions, it is in accordance with Biblical teachings. The principles of freedom and alignment with the natural law are seen as positive properties in Scripture, which says that this is how man was made to live. The problem of sin is what corrupts, and at its worst, applies an misguided ethical structure to the government and economy performed by men. Because capitalism in its base state is differentiated by this removal of an ethical imposition upon it at the set, it is not only compatible with a Christian worldview, but even more so than any other economic system.

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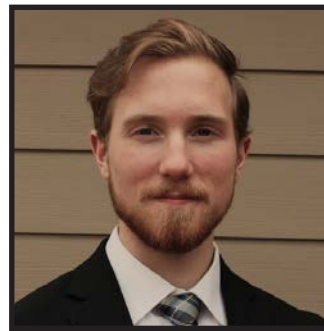
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# On the New Economy of Gender

Written by: Isaiah Mudge, Senior Editor



## Beautiful People Part I

A note to the reader: before we begin, I want to acknowledge that this is a sensitive subject. It is related to serious anxiety and suffering which many people have had to endure. My intent in writing this is to demonstrate why many Christians are resisting gender-affirming care because of the value they place in gender. This may be a different account of the subject than you yourself hold. If you find yourself becoming angry at my perspective, remember that we are both trying to achieve the goal of betterment for suffering people. We live in a time where people refuse to listen to ideas which give them a negative gut reaction. I encourage anybody who disagrees to submit a dissenting opinion to be published in Quaestus next year. Let's engage in dialogue for the sake of beautiful people.

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### Introduction

This is an essay written principally on the topic of value—specifically, the value of gender through the lens of economics. One of the issues in discussing this topic is the definition of gender, since various ideologies define it differently. One of the most prevalent definitions of gender in the United States defines gender as social and unrelated to biology. This account (The Modern Social Account of Gender) will be compared to an alternative account (The Christian Relational Account of Gender), and it will be shown that the Relational Account values gender more.

### Definitions

#### Value

Value in this paper simply refers to what something is worth. Especially because economics is being considered, worth will be measured in terms of price set by supply and demand. Whatever price a buyer and seller agree upon for an object, that is its worth and therefore its value.

For example, if the owner of a car accepts \$10,000 to sell it to a buyer, the value of the car monetarily is \$10,000.

Within a capitalist system there are two categories of value: exchangeable, and priceless. Some things have value that can be measured. These things may be cheap or they may be expensive, but they can be given a price tag and people are willing to trade or exchange them. These items are exchangeable. Other things are considered to be so valuable that they are not even a part of the exchange system. There is no monetary value high enough that could justify exchanging these priceless things, they are so valuable that they are in their own economic category and money cannot measure their worth. These items are priceless. If an object is exchangeable, it means there are other things more valuable than that object for which someone would want to exchange it. If an object is priceless, it means there is nothing more valuable than that object. Because of this, things in the priceless category are more valuable than things in the exchangeable category.

This metric of exchangeable versus priceless will be applied to different accounts of gender. An account of gender which considers gender to be exchangeable definitionally views gender as less valuable than an account which views gender as priceless.

### **Biological Sex**

Biological sex in this paper refers to the sex dichotomy of male and female. It is based on anatomy, physiology, genetics, and hormones. All sides represented hold to the same definition of biological sex.<sup>1</sup>

### **Gender**

There are many definitions for gender. This paper will consider two primary ones:

1. Gender as social: this view approaches

1 It must also be noted that “intersex” defines those people who display biological characteristics of both male and female. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss intersex people, although this discussion is certainly important.

gender as an exclusively social phenomenon that is not defined by biology. This can mean two things:

a. Gender is a set of social behavioral expectations associated with biological sex which are arbitrarily defined by culture. Regardless of biological sex, any person can be considered a man or woman by exhibiting the behaviors socially associated with the preferred gender.

b. Gender is a social construct and cultural expectations may be disregarded, any behavior may be considered to be associated with a gender, and gender goes beyond the concept of man and woman.

2. Gender as relational: this view approaches gender as an identity which is given based on biological relationships. A male is constrained to certain biological relationships (father, husband, son, brother) and a female is constrained to different ones (mother, wife, daughter, sister). Each set of relationships affect personal identity and therefore define gender.

### **The Modern Social Account of Gender**

The current, prevalent concept of gender as a changeable aspect of identity will be termed the Modern Social Account of Gender. This account defines gender as social. It pushes to provide medical resources for gender transitions and adherents of this perspective view such transitions as morally good. As we explore this perspective on gender, keep in mind these two guiding questions: what is the account of gender that is given, and what value does this account give to gender?

### **Examples of the Modern Social Account**

Many large organizations in the United States hold to the Modern Social account, professing that biological sex and gender are distinct from one another. According to the National Institutes of Health, for instance, “sex is a multidimensional biological construct based on anatomy, physiology, genetics, and hormones.” Conversely, “gender can be broadly defined as a multidimensional construct that encompasses gender identity and expression, as well as social and cultural expectations about status, characteristics, and behavior as they are

associated with certain sex traits,” (NIH, n.d.). Planned Parenthood, a giant in the woman’s health industry, puts it very simply: “It’s easy to confuse sex and gender. Just remember that biological or assigned sex is about biology, anatomy, and chromosomes. Gender is society’s set of expectations, standards, and characteristics about how men and women are supposed to act,” (Planned Parenthood, 2024a).

Because the Modern Social account of gender views biological sex and gender as disconnected, it holds that biological sex has no sway over what a person’s gender is. The NIH, for instance, describes the relationship between sex and gender this way: “A person’s gender identity (e.g., woman, man, trans man, gender-diverse, nonbinary) is self-identified, may change throughout their life, and may or may not correspond to a society’s cultural expectations based on their biological sex traits. For example, a person with typical female (sex term) sex traits may or may not be a woman (gender identity).”

### **The Modern Social Account Causes the Social Gender Contradiction**

This Modern Social belief that biological sex does not influence gender causes the Social Gender Contradiction. The contradiction occurs when advocates for the Modern Social account define biology as related to sex, not gender, and then advocate for biological sex-change surgeries and hormone therapy as gender-affirming care. This is a contradiction. If the very definition of gender is that it is not biologically founded, then we should not provide biological alterations to change or even just to affirm someone’s gender. To use biology to affirm gender is to admit that biology does influence what gender is. Thus, these procedures must either be considered sex-change surgeries which have no bearing on gender—in which case they should not be used as gender-affirming care. Or gender cannot be defined as being strictly social and must be defined as having a biological basis at least in some way. Because of the Social Gender Contradiction, people cannot advocate both for gender as social

and for biological gender affirming care. Either gender is not only social, or biology should not be altered to affirm gender. When adherents of the Modern Social Account support use of biological alterations to affirm gender they are actually indicating a belief that biological sex defines gender, even though they claim that it does not.

### **The Modern Social Account Defines Gender Too Broadly**

If a definition is too broad it becomes difficult to understand or discuss. A square, for instance, is defined as a shape with four sides of equal length and four interior angles of identical degree. If we define “square” as having nothing to do with lengths or angles, we no longer understand what a square is at all. It would be much harder to understand or discuss squares without a clear definition of what they are. In the same way if gender is related to biological sex, it is easier to understand what gender is because it is clearly outlined. If we define gender as social, as unrelated to biology, gender becomes so broadly defined that it can mean nearly anything. When gender is defined as a social construct it broadens what gender can be so much that the following effects occur:

1. Gender becomes difficult to distinguish from personal identity. If identity is the way people understand, define, and differentiate themselves, gender is simply identity surrounding social mannerisms and relation to other people. Anything which we call “gender” could just as easily be called “personal identity.” Therefore what distinguishes gender from personal identity is not defined.
2. Gender becomes totally changeable. Since there is nothing to restrict what gender can be, a person can term nearly any behavior or attitude as gender identity. Gender is not based on unchangeable biological characteristics. The only other option is that gender is defined by changeable personal preferences. Thus, gender is decided based upon an individual’s personal attitudes, beliefs, or impressions and can change rapidly. All these determinants of gender will be



broadly called internal experiences.

3. Each individual has total authority over their own gender selection and gender identity. This is because gender selection is based on internal experiences, and the only person who can discern these is the individual feeling them. Whatever a person desires or believes themselves to be, that is what they are licensed to be.
4. When biology is altered to affirm gender, it means gender affirmation surgeries affirm internal human experiences and disaffirm biological sex. Because gender is based on personal attitudes, the term “gender affirming,” means that the specific thing being affirmed is a person’s attitude, self-impression, or desire for self-expression. Since biology is changed to match gender, biology is disaffirmed and gender is given priority.

The Modern Social account of gender defines gender too broadly, unlinking it from biology. The result is that gender is essentially identical to your impression of your own identity or your own internal experience.

### **The Effects of the Modern Social Account on the Value of Gender**

If gender is not defined by biological sex then there can be incongruity between gender and biological sex, which is evidently occurring now. The solution, according to the Modern Social Account of gender, includes biological alterations to affirm gender. The result is that demand for biological solutions to gender incongruity arises in a nation. This demand is created by the contradictory Modern Social ideology which supports biological solutions to social gender problems.

This high demand is precisely the problem, because in a capitalist system supply rises to meet demand unless tempered by ideological constraints. When people demand something, like the capacity to transition gender or sex, and it is not prevented in a free market, other people capitalize on that demand. One of the only things that can prevent something from being bought and sold in a capitalist country is a prevailing ideology that it is too valuable to buy or sell. In

the United States, gender is now an exchangeable commodity. This reduces the value of gender because it indicates that gender has moved from the priceless category of American capitalism to the exchangeable aisle.

As a case study of the Modern Social Account, consider the recent boom in gender-affirming care provided by Planned Parenthood—an organization which explicitly defines gender as a social construct that does not have a basis in biology. Yet, according to Planned Parenthood itself, “most of our health centers provide hormone therapy and other gender-affirming services<sup>1</sup> for transgender and nonbinary patients,” (Planned Parenthood, 2024b). Numerically, that means most of Planned Parenthood’s 600 locations and 41 of its 49 affiliates are providing hormone therapy and gender-affirming care to patients (Planned Parenthood, 2023). That’s up nearly 2000% from the 32 Planned Parenthood centers that offered gender affirming care in 2016 (Brown, 2016). As noted by their yearly reports, the quantity of visits Planned Parenthood saw for “other procedures,” which includes “transgender services” rose from 15,902 in 2021, to 256,550 in 2022. That’s a 1,600% increase in one year (Planned Parenthood, 2021; Planned Parenthood, 2022). Again, according to Planned Parenthood’s own data, between 2021 and 2022 in the state of Ohio alone there was “a 544% increase in gender-affirming care visits,” which Planned Parenthood describes as, “indicating high demand and need for this care among Ohioans,” (Nieman, 2023).

Because it can be exchanged the value of gender in the United States, according to the Modern Social Account, is somewhere between \$121 and \$25,000. Planned Parenthood, for instance, notes that for gender-affirming care “the self-pay fee for a visit will be \$250 plus additional cost for labs. For a follow up visit, it will be \$200 plus additional cost for labs if needed,” (Planned Parenthood, 2024c). It does not appear that

1 These services include “Estrogen and anti-androgen hormone therapy, Testosterone hormone therapy, Puberty blockers, and Surgery referrals,” (Planned Parenthood, 2024).



these costs include the costs for hormones. In a case study of a transgender population, the NIH found that “the annual cost of providing gender-affirming care for this population was \$1,776,” (Baker, 2022). According to the same study, the average out-of-pocket cost of testosterone and estrogen hormone therapy per person was “\$121 and \$153 per year; GnRH therapy cost an average of \$2,410 per person per year.” These are repeat costs, consistently paid over the course of years. According to Forbes, more advanced surgical operations can cost up to \$25,000 (Medine, 2022). These surgical costs often follow months to years of payments for hormones.

More questionable companies are quickly arising as well to meet the specific demands of transgender individuals. Some brief research will show companies like New Era Pharmacy, True U Clinic, and Plume which are all online providers of resources to aid transgender individuals as they attempt biological changes to affirm gender. Plume, for instance, will provide customers with prescriptions for gender-affirming medications, letters for name and gender marker change, and medical letters of support for surgery, all for \$99 a month, plus the cost of hormones (Plume, n.d.). For only \$99 a month, a vulnerable population can bypass the medical expertise of a doctor to receive irreversible hormonal and surgical interventions as quickly as possible. For only \$99 a month people who experience severe distress over identity can give up their medical advocacy. This is equivalent to a patient buying medical letters of support for an amputation before a doctor has determined that the amputation is needed, simply because the patient is experiencing pain in the limb. Attention is certainly needed, but it would be perverse to supply this patient with an amputation simply because they are afraid there is no other way to find relief for their distress.

In the same way, the goods provided by these companies are oriented around meeting potential demands of buyers, with little concern over whether meeting these demands will help the patient. Because buyers are demanding it, Plume will help them to bypass direct doctor interaction

to receive letters of support for surgery. Capitalism meets demands, and the very definition of gender under the Modern Social Account has become a person’s internal experience of wants and desires—demands—regarding who they want to be. Under such an account, incongruity between biological sex and gender leads to intense demand for biological solutions to social gender problems. In the United States, companies are allowed to supply these demands because the Modern Social Account has enough influence that many people are open to and supportive of these biological solutions. As a result, transgender individuals are left highly vulnerable to an unrestrained capitalist machine. Plume gets money, and the buyer receives biological alterations more quickly simply because they demand them, whether or not it is medically beneficial. This is exploitation, and the Modern Social Account views it as a good thing.

There are members of the trans community who agree with me on this. In the words of Miquel Missé, a Spanish sociologist and trans activist, “trans people became a succulent market niche. (They tell us that we have the wrong body and then we pay them: it has to be admitted that this is a brilliant business model),” (Misse, 2022). Miquel goes on,

“Our bodies are fine — the problem is how certain parts of us are interpreted in our society, the meanings and connotations assigned to them. And due to this, unfortunately, many people might feel the need to alter themselves.... It’s like we’re being assaulted by all these ideas and yet we exonerate the thieves, shouting: ‘No one has stolen my body, I abandoned it of my own free will because it was never mine!’ But yes, it was yours. It was and is the only body you have,” (Misse, 2022).

This is what an intellectually honest account of gender as social looks like. Miquel argues that your biology does not influence your gender. The Modern Social Account, conversely, argues that gender is social and then advocates

for biological alterations to affirm gender. Miquel and I likely disagree on a great deal, but we entirely agree on this. Provision of biologically based solutions to transgender individuals on a mass scale has devalued both biological sex and gender while harming the people it pretends to help.

Capacity to change or replace something makes it less valuable. This is because things that are unique are highly valuable. Art is unique, it is irreplaceable, which is why we value it. You value your sight or your arm because if you lose them, you cannot get them back. How valuable is gender according to the Modern Social system? Economically speaking, according to the NIH statistics above, it is anywhere between \$121 and \$25,000. In this ideology, gender can be replaced with whatever you want it to be. But if something is beautiful then you will not change it. When we tell people their bodies need to be changed to affirm gender, as the Modern Social account does, we are telling them their own bodies are not beautiful, nor good, nor valuable, and then abandoning them to sell their bodies in pursuit of identity they may never find.

## **Beautiful People Part II The Christian Relational Account of Gender**

The Christian Relational Account holds that gender is defined by biological sex, and adherents of this view are frequently opposed to biological gender transition. Not all Christians hold this view, but adherents are predominantly Christian because this view is supported biblically. According to the Christian Relational Account, sex and gender are gifts from God which define human identity. They are invaluable, and they are to be accepted, not changed or exchanged in a capitalist market. The Christian Relational account holds that we need to accept gender and biology because they teach us about God and about one another. If one holds that gender and biology are changeable, he misses out on the opportunity to learn from them as well as the opportunity to serve other people. One does not need to agree with this view to understand that it places a higher

value on gender than the Modern Social Account does. When examining this perspective, remember our two guiding questions: what is the account of gender given and what is the value that this account brings to gender?

### **Biological Sex in Genesis**

The book of Genesis in the Bible speaks of the human biological male/female dichotomy as one of the most, and perhaps the most, important part of creation. Genesis chapter 1 gives an account of the creation of the universe, ending with the creation of man and woman and culminating with the powerful statement that, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good,” (Genesis 1:31). With this declaration of “very good,” God is saying creation is perfect. Now contrast this with chapter 2 of Genesis, which rewinds the narrative to give a specific account of God creating humans. In the text God creates Adam first, and before Eve is created God says, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him,” (Genesis 2:18). God’s declaration of “not good,” means that, without woman, creation is imperfect and flawed. Creation is not called “very good” until man and woman are together. This is only one example of how the human male/female dichotomy is given huge attention from the very beginning of the Bible.

Genesis continues in chapter 2:21-23, “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”

There is a lot to unpack from this. Humanity is given biological sex which appears in two kinds, male and female. Woman comes from man showing that the two are the same being, formed out of the same kind of body. When man and woman are brought together, man is overjoyed

because he is not alone. Until woman is created, creation is not complete. Woman is the final jewel in the crown of creation. She is the key to it. And she is so important that creation cannot fully be called good until she is there. All of these things indicate the deep importance of the distinction between male and female and God's intent that this distinction form a foundation for human interaction. We should expect that the distinction will be of huge importance theologically.

### **The Human Body Teaches Us About God.**

One of the important aspects of the Christian Relational approach to human biological sex and gender is that God uses it to teach us about Himself and one another. This is predominantly demonstrated through relationships between people which are defined by biology, like father, mother, son, daughter, etc. The primary example is marriage, which is biblically defined as a relationship between a human male and a human female. Ephesians 5:25, for instance, says "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Because humans understand what love between a husband and a wife is like, we have a reference for how God loves us. Furthermore, because we understand that Jesus loved the church so much that he was crucified to save her, we have a reference point for how deeply a husband must love his wife.

The Bible uses nearly every biological sex-based relationship to help define who God is and who we are. Husband and wife, father and child, mother and child, all of these images and more are used. It is important to note that these distinctions mean nothing if our gendered experiences are not different. Furthermore, we must communicate with those whose experiences are different from ours in order to understand these metaphors. I am a man; I cannot be a wife. To understand the biblical metaphor of Christ and the church as husband and wife, I need to learn from someone who is a wife. Her experience will teach me about how I relate to God, because I am a member of the church. Furthermore, the unique roles we have in life complement one another. We are purposefully

made in different ways so that we can care for each other. In this way the Christian Relational Account of Gender both teaches us about ourselves using our very bodies and encourages us to value and cherish the differences between us. Thus, the Christian Relational perspective results in biological sex being viewed as a priceless thing, something to be accepted as a part of human identity, something to be learned from and not something to be changed.

### **The Christian Relational Account Unites Biology and Gender**

The Christian Relational account holds that one's personal experience of life is different based on biological sex because the biological sex one has determines many of the relationships one can have. Only a male human can be a father, only a female human can be a mother, and whether one experiences life as a father or mother drastically changes the experience of life one has. Whereas the Modern Social account bases gender on internal experience, the Christian Relational account sees experience as largely based on biological sex and gender. In this account, biology and behavior are united, but not the same, and human identity is more clearly outlined because the way biology plays into gender is clearly defined.

### **Gender as Relational Clarifies Identity**

Identity is, simply, a question of who you are, and so gender identity should be who you are on account of your gender. When people use the term "gender identity," though, they are often actually referring to behavior. In public discourse, for instance, affirmation of gender identity involves affirming the behaviors that a person wishes to exhibit. When people say, "affirm my gender," what they mean is, "call me by the pronoun I like, and say it's okay for me to wear the clothes I like and let me behave in the way that makes me feel the best." Note that the request for affirmation here is centered on behavior, not identity. The Modern Social Account of Gender struggles to define how gender identity is any different from these behaviors.

Biological relationships (son, father, wife, daughter, etc.) define your identity far more than behavior preferences. According to a Christian Relational understanding, your gender identity is who you are on account of your biological sex-based relationships. Any mother will tell you that her role as a mother has profoundly changed her identity. If she was not a mother, she would not be the same person. The myriad list of engendered roles each of us has in the lives of others is defined by biological sex. Your gender identity is who you are on account of these roles, which are sex-based, and which include vastly different experiences of life. Most sides of this controversy seem to understand this, at least implicitly. There would be no reason to be trans-gender if the experience of all genders was the same.<sup>1</sup>

The most important part of the Christian understanding of gender involves accepting the relationships and responsibilities one has. People should not try to flee from them, or to exchange these relationships for other ones. In the Christian account, the most important aspect of gender involves serving the parents, children, siblings, and spouses who make us who we are. Accepting these biological relationships defines gender identity. When gender is celebrated as a personal selection of identity, and biological sex is rejected or even changed, we become self-centered, believing our identity should be rooted deeply within ourselves instead of on the relationships outside of us which truly define us. The fact that I am my parent's son has more thoroughly affected who I am than my personal impressions of myself. I cannot be a son unless I am male, this is definitional upon sex, and my experience as a son has profoundly shaped my identity. Thus, the Christian Relational Account sees gender as priceless because it deeply defines us.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that some human relationships are not based on biology. Friends, for instance, are not defined by whether they are male or female. I would argue that even these relay different experiences based on the biological sex of those involved. That said, it would take another paper to prove it and my central argument stands regardless.

Without it we would not even know who we are.

### **The Christian Relational Account Promotes Human Wellbeing**

One of the primary concerns of the Modern Social Account of gender is behavior. The concern is that a person should be able to exhibit whatever behaviors they please, that they should not be constrained into behaving a certain way because their culture has an expectation for how their gender will behave. This is a fair critique. Different cultures do have different expectations in general for men and women which makes it seem that there is no universal, objective standard for how the genders should behave.

While the arbitrariness of many behaviors is important to keep in mind, the primary concern of the Christian Relational Account is whether humans are being cared for. According to the Christian Relational Account our behavior is meant to be oriented towards loving the people with whom we have biological relationships. If a person is a son, his responsibility is to care for his parents and vice versa. If a woman is a wife, she has a responsibility to care for her husband and vice versa. This is the essence of gender identity. The focus is not whether you are behaving in the way you would like to, but whether you are loving those around you.

The behaviors a person can exhibit are extensive and somewhat arbitrary. There is no universal law that men should wear pants and women should wear dresses. The focus should not be on what you are doing, but who you are trying to care for. The goal is to avoid becoming obsessed with what is happening inside of us and to focus on the needs of those around us. If there are gendered expectations in a society and a person is deviating from them because they are rejecting their gender identity and therefore their gender roles, that is wrong. This is likely not because the specific behavior is wrong, but because the person is refusing to accept their identity and the responsibility that have to care for other people because of who they are.



Many people are reluctant to accept an identity that they did not choose, especially when that identity directs the behaviors that person should take. Yet the result is an account of gender that involves caring for the people around us, rather than simply defining gender as an internal attitude. This Christian Relational Account of gender naturally supports human wellbeing and encourages healthy social cultures. It is for this reason that the Christian Relational Account views gender as priceless. If gender becomes exchangeable, this social fabric breaks down because people no longer define themselves by the most critical relationships in their lives.

### **The Christian Relational Account Values and Affirms Gender**

The Christian Relational Account of Gender is both gender-affirming and gender-valuing. Christianity is gender-affirming because it views gender as something that should be personally accepted and affirmed, not changed. A gender transition is a rejection, not an affirmation, of the gender and gender roles that a person currently has. Remember, however, that “gender” means something different in the Christian Relational perspective than it does in the Modern Social perspective. According to the Christian Relational perspective, affirming gender means accepting the parts of our identity that are beyond our control but that still make us who we are. Whether you grow up as a son or a daughter, spend more time around males or females, all these things can subtly influence your personality, and the experiences you have on account of your identity are caused in part by your biological sex. A Christian Relational approach to gender involves accepting the identity placed upon us and attempting to serve others as best we can. Gender is valued in this account because it views gender as an unchangeable aspect of identity, one that must not be exchanged for any price.

Christianity places such high value on sex and gender because God’s creation design is intentional, it is meant to reveal His works and majesty. You do not need to believe the Genesis account is true to understand these points, nor

do you even need to be a Christian to see the powerful emphasis that the Bible places on human sex distinctions. Biblically, one of the greatest aspects of all creation is the distinction between male and female in humans and the capacity of the two to work in concert. Our differences, indeed, the most drastic differences between us, make the foundation for the greatest gifts we can give to one another. The highest of these is the way our relationships show us God.

This account of gender is a high one indeed. In it, male and female, man and woman, are all irreducibly unique. Gender is indispensable. Sex is priceless, and there is no value high enough that could be assigned to it. To exchange it would be to give up an image of God and to forsake a responsibility to those around us. It is a required aspect of your identity, but it is a gift, not a cage. It is a part of your being that teaches you how to know who you are, not something that is to be determined individually. Ultimately, gender is primarily oriented around the giving of ourselves to those around us based on our unique skills and gifts, valuing the relationships we have. This makes gender priceless, not only to each of us individually but also in our relationships with one another.

### **Conclusion: Beautiful People**

There seem to be two broad conversations over gender occurring in the United States, and they are in conflict because they do not mean the same thing when they use the word “gender.” The Modern Social approach views gender as unconstrained, as malleable and changeable. It roots gender in personal identity and has resulted in biological operations being viewed as commodities that claim to alter personal identity for a price. The Christian Relational approach views gender and biological sex in union, as gifts which are to be learned from and used to help other people. It roots gender in the relationships we have with people who love us, and according to the Christian perspective there is no price on this earth high enough that it could be given in exchange for gender.

If the Modern Social Account views gender as something that is chosen, then the Christian Relational Account views it as something that is received. In a gender as social approach to gender ideology a man may want to become a woman, not to give the gift of himself to the world based on who he already is. In a Christian Relational perspective, biology is seen as a gift. The Christian Relational Account appreciates gender strongly as priceless, beautiful thing. The Modern Social Account makes gender to be something that can be manufactured.

This manufacture of identity is the heart of the matter, because it indicates two vastly different understandings of gender. The Modern Social Account views gender as a hyper-individualistic matter of personal choice, where one builds one's own identity out of a quagmire of uncertainty surrounding who one is. What surprise is there that, when faced with such uncertainty surrounding who you are, and devaluation of your very being, it leads to deep anxiety towards biological sex? For if gender is a construct, then you are a construct. If gender is a construct, then a vast part of your identity is arbitrary. This is a terrifying thought. From a Christian Relational perspective, identity, gender, and sex are accounted for. They are gifts that should put us at ease, ways we are meant to be. They do not restrain us; they teach and supply us with what we need to live in the world.

Gender is beautiful, but gender has been abused. It is immensely dangerous when an economy forms around self-proclaimed identity because it makes priceless things into exchangeable things. Gender should not be bought and sold; biology should not be exchanged. The Christian Relational Account values gender highly because gender teaches people how to love each other. It teaches them who they are, and who God is. It is not from an attempt to constrain people to arbitrary behaviors that the Christian Relational Account bases gender on biology. Rather it is to hold onto a gift that teaches us how to be human. The Christian Relational Account simply wishes to call human bodies beautiful and human gender

identity priceless.

So, with all this being said, you decide. Which of these two views of sex and gender glorifies people? Which view values gender more? Which view affirms gender, rather than personal preferences? Which is attempting to keep capitalism within ethical boundaries and which is allowing transgender individuals to be used for profit? Which of these movements truly desires to care for beautiful people?

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