

A Cynic and Epicurean Take on the Morality of Sex Change

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Abstract

The desire to change one's biological identity has been questioned as to its ethical acceptability. The predominant purpose of this paper is to investigate the ethical appropriateness of sex reassignment surgery (SRS) on account of gender as a concept as it questions the grounds at which SRS stands. More to the point, sex change, on the matter of its ethical adequacy, is examined in a cynic and epicurean point of view. Cynicism seeks a life lived according to nature through the rejection of worldly desires while acting based on pleasure to secure happiness is the foundation of the Epicurean thought. With these two ideologies, the paper strives to address the morality of SRS.

Keywords: Cynicism, Epicureanism, happiness, morality, pain and pleasure, sex reassignment surgery

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I. Introduction

Sex reassignment surgery (SRS), referred to as *sex change* by many, has been a significant topic of ethical arguments in present times.³ These disputes are concerned with SRS on the subject of the morality of its practice. They encompass several philosophies, beliefs, and even psychologically and medically related notions. The discussion of sex change goes as far back as defining and identifying the very essence of the concepts of both sex and gender. Following the deliberation of the nature of the two, this paper examines the headway of their psychological entailments and how such necessitates a philosophical standpoint as moral issues regarding body modification come forth.

Psychological disturbances associated with sex change namely: Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID) and Gender Dysphoria (GD) are discussed following the examination of ethical values surrounding SRS's morality. BIID and GD are psychological interferences most commonly associated with SRS, both of which discloses the factor of identity confusion as relating to the inclination of people in undergoing, or so much as considering, sex change. As these two disturbances are discussed with their supposed effect to one's logical reasoning in addressing and catering desirable actions, so does the intervention of moral philosophies that aims to examine the morality of the issue at hand follows.

Debatably, one would consider defining the morality of SRS in terms of modern philosophical positions because the issue undeniably exists in the contemporary setting. Trying to deduce the morality of sex change through ancient philosophies such as in a Cynic and Epicurean point of view would nonetheless be seen as inappropriate and may oftentimes be insufficient. But restating, for instance, one of the notable phrases of a modern thinker, the expansion of current philosophical debates may be considered as that which "consist of a series of footnotes to

³ Maggie Hume, "Sex, Lies, and Surgery: The Ethics of Gender Reassignment Surgery" in *Res Cogitans* Volume 2, Issue 1, 2011. Available at: <https://commons.pacificu.edu/rescogitans/vol2/iss1/5/>. Retrieved: December 3, 2017.

Plato.”⁴ It will then suffice to say that even modern moral grounds that were mostly concerned with standards for rules of conduct and rightness of action that eventually lead to laws remain an offshoot of the ancient tradition. It is not intended, however, to debunk the progressive aims of modern to contemporary thinkers in line with confronting present-day matters. Ancient values also may still have its restrictions in the modern social conditions whether they are in one aspect or another, but it is rather less compulsive in attempting to establish an unshakeable standard for rationality.⁵ It (ancient philosophy) is just not bent so much on trying to deal with intricately detailed beliefs and practices controlled by the idea of fantasizing a world where reason seems to be distant from social and historical realities.⁶ Hence, highlighting the early roots of established moral principles may at least serve as a call for humans to go back to the simple ways where one can deal with varying stigmas that rob him or her of a life characterized by *happiness*—the very foundation of most ancient ethical ideas.

In correspondence with this, sex change then is speculated through a Cynic and Epicurean approach as both delve upon the goal of achieving happiness by promoting a simple way of life devoid of unnecessary desires that entail *pain*. Limiting the discussion to such Hellenistic viewpoints, the argument that SRS presumably is morally impermissible as it is initially considered a *vain and empty desire* in this essay shall be exhausted.

The embodiment of an ideal Cynic amounts to one’s rejection of luxurious indulgence for “poverty is the only wealth” and preference to “simple, frugal and ascetic lifestyle” is rather

⁴ This phrase was modified from the novel words of Alfred North Whitehead as he states that, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that *it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato*”. His purpose here is sought from the angle of enthroning Plato—a remarkable ancient thinker—as the emblem of the foundational and fundamental questions in different philosophical standpoints before they branch out in many ways possible as an aftermath of modernity. (See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 2nd Edition, USA: Free Press, 1979, 39).

⁵ Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (NY: Routledge, 2006), 197.

⁶ *Ibid.*

encouraged.⁷ In relation to that, the summary of the Epicurean thought is comprised of the basic principles of limiting oneself of desires that bring about any kind of pain for the aim of an individual ought to lie only on certain *pleasures* that have long-term drives. In the words of Epicurus:

The removal of all that causes pain marks the boundary of pleasure. Wherever pleasure is present and as long as it continues, there is neither suffering nor grieving nor both together.⁸

Considering these ancient outlooks, the moral tension surrounding sex change is then examined on the basis of its suitability to the mentioned principles whose chief interest is to note the importance of the complete exclusion of all pains and their probable cause. Achieving long-term pleasure like peace and tranquillity, however, is strictly preferable.

In the eyes of the Cynic and the Epicurean, to conclude, the desire-driven reasons for undergoing body modification as well as its psychological ill-effects deem SRS questionable as to its moral aptness.

II. Sex, Gender, and Postgenderism

The conceptual consciousness between sex and gender began in the mid-1950s when psychologists attempted to define the distinction between sex and gender. They referred to *sex* as the physical qualities distinct in a man or woman while describing *gender* as simply psychological traits and behaviors relating to a male or female.⁹ Consequently, these definitive views aroused

⁷ Though there exist a good number of studies that expose the historical account of the Cynics such that there are other Cynics even before Diogenes, the ideas that these ancient people underscore is grounded on the same premises: living in accord with nature. See for example William Desmond, "Ancient Cynics and their times" in *Cynics* (UK: Acumen Publishing, 2008), 9-76.

⁸ Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, trans. Russel M. Geer (USA: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1964), 60.

⁹ Charlene Muehlenhard & Zoe Peterson, "Distinguishing Between Sex and Gender: History, Current Conceptualizations, and Implications" in *Sex Roles*

tension among feminist psychologists who believed that such conclusions foster the notion that the differences between men and women are significantly fixed and irrevocable. Historically, these arguments prompted the birth of a proposed definition of gender as “traits that are culturally assumed to be appropriate for women and men” which influentially veered the use of both terms in the psychological field.¹⁰

Moreover, sex is referred to as the biological characteristics, both physical and physiological attributes, inherent to a male or female.¹¹ Chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive sex organs are the factors that commonly direct the categorization of being a male or female. On the contrary, gender is defined as the classification or personal preference of an individual as to whether he or she is male, female, or ambivalent.¹² Aside from these three categories, the LGBTQ+¹³ is often associated with this word. Gender and sex then are significantly different but are both impartial results of societal constructions.

Fairly, the term *sex reassignment surgery* may impose a number of misconceptions. The term suggests that the biological

Volume 64, Issue 11, 2011. Available at: https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/ereserve/ereserve_aa/. Retrieved: March 20, 2018.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ American Psychological Association, “Answers to Your Questions: For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality” (Washington, DC: Office of Public and Member Association, 2008).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other emerging sexual preferences identified today. Such inclinations determine how a person sexually regards himself or herself as to whether he or she is attracted to either a male, female, or both. Aside from this, the LGBTQ+ community includes those who have undergone sex reassignment surgery for the physical expression of their preferred sex, namely, the transgender or the transsexuals. A male who has undergone SRS is called a *transwoman* and a female who had the same operation to conform to her gender preference is called a *transman*. (See “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Review of Concepts, Controversies and Their Relation to Psychopathology Classification Systems” in *Frontiers of Psychology* Volume 6, 2015. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4589638/>. Retrieved: March 17, 2018).

sex of an individual may be reconstructed to conform to what sex one wants to embody which is, according to the scientific field, unfeasible to do on so many aspects such as the impossibility of changing a person's chromosomes.¹⁴ Likewise, using the term *transsexual*, pertaining to the capacity of transferring from one sex to another, represents a questionable claim as well. Both of these expressions create a false perception of a sexed individual, scientifically and technically speaking.¹⁵

Deviating from the traditional understanding of sex and gender, postgenderism, a rising movement advocated by gender theorists, is regarded as the termination of socially and psychologically constructed gender roles. This ideology is in contrast to promoting gender equality and rather seeks to eliminate gender binary, male and female, and the range of all other identified genders altogether. This advocacy perceives gender as arbitrary therefore it cannot set limits on the vast opportunities humans can subjectively be. Additionally, postgenderists believe that the biological sex that humans possess is more complex than it seems and less of a matter that could be simply categorized as *binary*.¹⁶

The technical confusion between sex and gender developed over the course of time and seems to have taken an even perplexing progression in present modern settings. As different notions emerged concerning the true definition of the two, so did the rise of philosophers who placed their own theories of how sex and gender are defined.¹⁷

The human body is only a medium, a determinant, through which there regulates a set of cultural connotations that are only to be considered as externally related to the body itself.¹⁸ As such, the body is only the cultural representation of one's social

¹⁴ Richard Fitzgibbons, et al., "The Psychopathology of Sex Reassignment Surgery" in *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* Volume 9, Issue 1, p. 119, 2009. Available at: <https://couragerc.org>. Retrieved: December 3, 2017.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁷ See Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12.

environment. Gender and sex then are the limits in which the boundaries of inspection and definition of both are set within the meaning that culture imposed on them. In this case, both are envisioned based on binary structures, being a male or a female, that come to be seen as the language of universal rationality. In current social settings, the concept of sex is understood through cultural practices and traditional gender norms and that certain kinds of identities beyond identified binary systems of sex cannot exist if those identities do not follow particular standards.¹⁹ Standards here are identities that conform to cultural intelligibility and, otherwise, they will appear to others as plainly impossible.²⁰ Every bodily gesture, movement, and manner emanates the impression of a self that complies with the very standards given to what a sexed or gendered individual is supposed to be. Being so, gender then can be defined as a socially structured identity that people come to believe and where the body, its medium, performs it as a practice of this belief.²¹

III. Psychological Disorders Correlated with Sex Change

In view of the discussion pertaining to the existing gender norms set forth by the functioning society, sex change became the *solution* of many in attempting to adapt to these social standards of what a man and a woman must be to be even considered as such. In recent studies circulating the medical and ethical acceptability of performing sex reassignment surgery, psychologists have linked the procedure of undergoing sex change to a number of mental disorders. These certain disorders, as suggested by numerous studies conducted regarding the subject at hand, alter the way an individual evaluates his or her choices thus breaching the autonomous way of decision-making thereby qualifying SRS as ethically unjustified. As these psychological disorders continue to rise as underlying factors identified with SRS, more and more studies are conducted to examine these factors that drive individuals the body to sex reorientation.

¹⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

²⁰ Ibid., 23.

²¹ Ibid.

One of the most controversial issues associated with sex reassignment surgery, and even with transsexuals for that matter, is relating such a practice to these psychological disorders. As the procedure is related to mental insufficiencies, it disregards the notion of many that SRS liberates the true identity of homosexuals. Additionally, that kind of argument negates the very essence of the idea of freedom conceived by others whereby SRS is a practice of liberation towards being one with one's social environment.²²

Discussed hereof are two of the most prominent mental disorders associated with sex reassignment surgery.

a. Body Integrity Identity Disorder

Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID) is a brain irregularity that causes abnormal occurrences in a person's life.²³ The primary desire of patients with BIID is to paralyze their limbs or to modify some parts of the body. The reason behind this kind of longing for body modification is the feeling of identity disparity.²⁴ The person feels as though his or her body is mismatched with his or her mental body image. Ironically, the constant need to feel *whole* and *complete* leads the subject to amputate or sever a significant part of the body.

In contrast with Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), a disorder closely related to and often mistaken for BIID, an individual with BIID craves to reconstruct a part of his or her body in an attempt to better reflect his or her preconceived idea of who he or she is as an individual. In extreme cases, some even alter the position of the spinal cord so as to cause paralyzation of limbs. On the other hand, BDD²⁵ patients seek to amputate a part

²² Gillian Hughes, *Liberation Practices: Towards Emotional Wellbeing Through Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 143.

²³ Sabine Muller, "Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID) – Is the Amputation of Healthy Limbs Ethically Justified?" in *The American Journal of Bioethics* Volume 9, Issue 1, p. 36, 2009. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net>. Retrieved: December 18, 2017.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is also associated with social anxiety disorders and a number of other mental illnesses such as depression,

of the body because they find a certain limb disgusting or flawed.²⁶

b. Gender Dysphoria

Gender Dysphoria (GD) is another psychological disturbance associated with sex change as well as with BIID. GD is defined as the dissatisfaction felt by gender dysphoric individuals towards the physical traits that they possess which are specific to their biological sex.²⁷ People with gender dysphoria feel that they do not fit or match the body that they occupy. They strongly believe that they are not suited to the characteristics and external composition of the sex they were born with but rather they deem themselves as belonging to and should be considered as the opposite sex. For instance, the regular discomfort may lead one to alter his or her physical appearance to be satisfied with it. In some cases, this often leads to subjecting oneself to sex reassignment surgery to physically reflect his or her preferred sex.

This kind of conflict affects people in different aspects. The immense stress that GD-diagnosed individuals experience becomes their driving force in trying to embody the physical characteristics opposed to that of their inherent sex. Thus, this constant tension eventually strains every angle of their lives.

IV. Towards a Hellenistic Perspective

Given the psychological issues that come along with one's decision of undergoing sex change, discussing its impact apropos

eating disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorders. BDD sufferers become overly obsessed with their external appearance which often leads to either numerous hours of looking at themselves in front of a mirror or trying to avoid one to elude from the chance of seeing what they presume as a *flawed* self.

²⁶ N.d. Anxiety and Depression Association of America. "Understanding the Facts: Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD). Available at: <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/related-illnesses/other-related-conditions/body-dysmorphic-disorder-bdd>. Retrieved: January 12, 2018.

²⁷ Ibid. (See also: WebMD, "When You Don't Feel at Home with Your Gender". Available at: <https://webmd.com/mental-health/gender-dysphoria#1>. Retrieved: December 18, 2017.)

to ethical considerations necessitates a philosophical grounding. With the popular definition of philosophy as the “mother of all sciences”, varying branches of science including psychology are noted to have philosophical beginnings.²⁸ Later on, as the latter became as rigorous as other science-related fields in the modern setting, it established its study as primarily directed on human cognition and consciousness using experimental methods. From here, one can then argue that this gift of modernity is already apt to address the boundaries of sex change including its moral apprehensions. However, this paper also initially emphasized the point of enthroning some ancient ideas towards the ethical inquiry concerning sex change; aside from it being the root of the present-day theories that were borne from it, an ancient mindset is again less complex and demanding in building a rough ground for rationality.

Scrutinizing then the relevance of the mentioned disorders correlated with sex change, it then projects an undeniable disposition that those who engage in the said procedure experience one of the evils that quietly disturbs humanity: *pain*.

The dichotomy of pain and pleasure has been the foundation of later ancient ethical standpoints after Plato and Aristotle. The debates rooted on such were an era that most historians name as Hellenistic.²⁹ As such, the Epicureans along with the Cynics and the Stoics were made known. Highlighting the former, pain is something that ought to be avoided for it entails some ill-effects of rambling away from the ultimate security of an individual’s well-being, *happiness*.³⁰ Subjecting then the somewhat inescapable association of the psychological disturbances mentioned—BIID, BD, and GD—to sex change, the end of achieving our ultimate Epicurean goal becomes far from reach. Notwithstanding the fact that the alteration of one’s biological edifice might be a satisfying and pleasurable release for

²⁸ See Kendra Cherry, “The Origins of Psychology: From Philosophical Beginnings to the Modern Day” in *Verywell Mind*, 2017. Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/a-brief-history-of-psychology-through-the-years-2795245>. Retrieved: March 26, 2018.

²⁹ See A. A. Long, “Later Ancient Ethics” in *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, ed. John Skorupski (New York: Routledge, 2010), 52-57.

³⁰ Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, 53-59.

the patient, the shadows of the physical struggles amid the stages of recovery, the inevitable societal hearsays and labeling, and the like still linger underneath. Thus, fulfilling the desires of sex change for a presupposed gratification rather traps the individual to the loops that which is contrary to the set standards of Epicurean pleasure for it defies the actual fulfillment of a healthy body and peace of mind.³¹The Epicureans, along with the Cynics who rather prefer a simple life in accord with nature, will surely wince at the thought of undergoing sex change considering their strict censorship among the disadvantages that it entails.

V. A Cynic and Epicurean Stance on Sex Change

Apart from the unceasing conflict surrounding the practice of SRS in the medical field, the morality of this procedure is also questioned among varying branches of ethics under distinct philosophies. As such, this section provides a discussion of sex change relative to the evaluation of practicing this form of body modification with regards to whether it is of moral worth.

Cynicism stresses the notion of living life in accordance with nature.³² It rejects all forms of conventional desires: wealth, power, and fame to name a few, and only demands the basic necessities needed to survive. Since *nature* represents quite a vague idea, it stirred confusion over its concise definition until the fifth century BCE when Sophistic thinkers began to recognize the difference of the two conceptions of how things come to be, either naturally or as a result of human customs.³³ As such, they regarded the practice of varying customs as illogical just because they are traditional and prevalent. Such socially constructed customs are understood by modern thinkers as beneficiary only to the extent to which they conform to nature.³⁴

Above all the existing debates on the concept of nature, in a Cynic outlook, it basically implies the same idea as that of living

³¹ Ibid., 55.

³² Desmond, *Cynics*, 132.

³³ Ibid., 138-139.

³⁴ Ibid, 141.

life in *simplicity*.³⁵ In ancient times, Cynics were known for their primitive way of living and barbaric manner of philosophizing. Diogenes of Sinope was a well-known Cynic of his time who practically lived in a tub and owned nothing but a cloak and staff similar to other Cynics. Diogenes lived his life practicing such customs not to urge people into living their lives necessarily in the same way as he did but to emphasize the internalization of Cynicism through simplifying one's lifestyle and freeing ourselves of inessential needs and customs.³⁶

In relation to the rejection of socially established needs, Epicureanism advocates the same conviction. Epicureanism is a belief which aims to regulate pleasure and states that the greatest good is living life in opposition to conventional desires commonly associated with pleasure.³⁷ Pleasures, highlighted in an Epicurean approach, are not all choice worthy in the same way that those decisions which cause pain must be avoided.³⁸ Epicurus claims that one should consider cultivating a kind of pleasure that is of long-term self-interest. Additionally, he believes that one should abstain from anything that brings only short-lived pleasure if doing so would generate a longer span of experiencing such a desire.³⁹

Further, desire as described by Epicurus has three categories: natural and necessary desires, natural but non-necessary desires, and *vain* desires.⁴⁰ The first type speaks of the needs of humans necessary for survival such as food, water, and the like. It is easy to satisfy but quite difficult to remove from one's life since the subconscious constantly yearns for it as an impulse. Natural but non-necessary desires represent human self-indulgence. The last category, however, depicts the conventional or worldly desires of humans. The whereabouts of these features lead us to a palpable understanding that not all desires should be fed. As emphasized by Epicurus, the final end of a blessed and

³⁵ Ibid, 150.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 334.

³⁸ Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, 55-57.

³⁹ Ibid., 55-56.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 55.

happy life lie in the attainment of “the health of the body and peace of mind”, the kinds that bring “freedom from pain and fear”.⁴¹

Pleasure is the greatest good; but some pleasures bring pain, and in choosing, we must consider this. For the very reason that pleasure is the chief and the natural good, we do not choose every pleasure...there are times when we pass by pleasures if they are outweighed by the hardships that follow...⁴²

Taking every pain as evil at this juncture, carefulness in choosing and deciding the pleasures that fancy us vis-à-vis their advantages and disadvantages should be then observed. Following such idea, SRS should be carefully weighed in consideration of the physical and emotional pains that come with it. With this, can sex change be then accounted as something morally *good*?

Morality, in a society where it exists as a pedestal for many, is not necessarily something which defines what is good or otherwise. It prevails to be of support and give rise to many other principles that come to be.⁴³ This is the premise at which sex change has been continually examined, that is, if it is in accordance with prevalent moral grounds.

Sex change is seen by its patients, and more so by its advocates, as liberating and therapeutic in the sense that it helps unmask the true identity of identity diffused individuals. Their strong conviction on such a transparent belief is not as intense as their initiative to see through such blind ideas of what sex change really is beyond it being a simple transformation. These people fail to see what negative side effects SRS brings upon its patients physically, mentally, and emotionally. The arguments mostly served by such people are often the same in context with the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. 56.

⁴³ See Robin Barrow, *An Introduction to Moral Philosophy and Moral Education* (US: Routledge, 2007), 7-8.

statement, “if that [sex change] is what would make you *happy*, then so be it.” Given this, how can one really define happiness?

Influenced by the Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, Epicurus enthrones happiness as the highest good and is sought for the purpose of it and not for the interest of anything else.⁴⁴ He stresses the idea that to achieve happiness is to fulfill desires which are not constructed on *vain* and empty beliefs, his third classification of desires mentioned earlier, as these drift us further away from peace and calmness of mind, and absence of bodily pain.⁴⁵

In relation to the previous discussions, BIID-diagnosed and gender dysphoric patients who seek to undergo surgical reorientation turn their focus on this kind of surgery to alleviate their relentless desire to conform to the biological composition of the other sex. As such, surrendering to sex reassignment surgery confirms that one is giving in to his or her vain desire structured by societal norms of what a man and a woman must be physically. It deviates from the idea of Epicurus, and even the Cynical way of thinking, that to truly live is to live life without the burden of all-too-human artificialities.⁴⁶ Subduing the body to SRS will more or less fulfill one’s desire of having the same biological structure as that of the opposite sex but then, in more ways than one, these desires would evolve into more desires, more pain, more yearning, and so on.⁴⁷ Thus, creating a life cycle built on constant dissatisfaction. Bearing in mind that a person diagnosed with BIID has a detectable dysfunction related to mental instability; it follows that a non-surgical solution must be enforced to treat the subjective demand of wanting to undergo SRS for identity reorientation and not immediately resorting to surgical removal of a functioning organ to treat such an illness.

Although both doctrines are deemed here as inclining sex change as being morally unacceptable, the conflict within such a notion arises from one’s implicit understanding of the context of

⁴⁴ Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, 54-59.

⁴⁵ Ibid. (See also Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 337).

⁴⁶ William Desmond, *Cynics*, 132.

⁴⁷ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 337.

both. For other scholars, Cynicism has two variants that more often than not, help shape modern society.⁴⁸ The first speaks of moralistic anti-materialism and individualism whereby both ideologies shape how one perceives present social settings as excessively concerned with material possessions and that freedom and self-dependence are vital. The problem with this is the fact that the factors which determine freedom, with regards to an Epicurean interpretation of it, are developed alongside a *libertarian viewpoint*.⁴⁹ As such, the libertarian tradition separates the actions from its determinants as well as the psychological condition of the person in the process of decision-making. Considering the two driving factors as to why individuals engage themselves to sex reassignment surgery, sex change then will be beginning to set off its position on moral concerns given such philosophical grounds since freedom, as previously discussed, is never concerned with a person's intellectual government. Since one momentarily believes that he or she knows what he or she needs in order to attain a pleasurable life, then such actions are not as ethically problematic as they may seem even though they have been decided by debatable psychological states.

The second side of Cynicism is its hypocritical failure to progress at the same rate with morality.⁵⁰ Such side of a Cynic philosophy entitles its agent with the selfish misuse of the entirety of its philosophy.⁵¹ Cynicism, in its counterproductive form, limits us to accept socially established customs that could possibly and potentially aid a larger part of society into achieving development, whether it is happiness or further progression. The Cynic and Epicurean mindset dwell on *things to be chosen and things to be rejected* vis-à-vis the limits of the painful aftermaths of certain pleasures.⁵²

⁴⁸ See John Christian Laursen, "Cynicism Then and Now" in *Iris: European Journal of Philosophy & Public Debate*, Volume 1, Issue 2, p. 481, 2009. Available at: <http://fupress.net/index.php/iris/article/view/3316/0>.

⁴⁹ See Tim O'Keefe, *Epicurus on Freedom* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

⁵⁰ John Christian Laursen, "Cynicism Then and Now" in *Iris: European Journal of Philosophy & Public Debate*, 481.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 482.

⁵² Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, 5.

VI. Conclusion

As discussed in the previous sections from the very beginning of this paper, sex reassignment surgery is questioned for its morality under several elements and sentiments in connection with selected moral philosophies. The Cynic and Epicurean perspectives on sex change see it more as a socially established need cultivated by the norms of what a man or woman should physically, and even mentally, be. Following this, it may be regarded as morally inappropriate without considering all other aspects and notions underneath both philosophies' explicit nature. Then again, such philosophies, even the most extensively evaluated ones, do not fully account for the general notion as to the morality of SRS's medical operation itself.

In consideration of the definite understanding of sex and gender previously established in this paper, both are only the limits at which culture fancy it to be seen and interpreted by the whole society. And so, to challenge such limits, to go beyond the familiar binary structures of sex and gender is to be deemed as nonviable. Relative to sex alterations, the practice of subduing the body to sex reassignment to better conform to the physical standards of what a man and woman must be should not be an option when assigning social identities.⁵³ Anatomical sex *corrections* support the hostile norms which society has established as the only two considered sex and gender identities, male and female. In so doing, SRS becomes a default solution for the satisfaction of people's constant and innumerable desires to fit in with such norms. And for others, this paves the way for the uprising of issues related to psychological disorders.

Corresponding to the major principles presented and examined in detail, Cynicism and Epicureanism emphasize that one must act and live without the restraints of these societal customs and conventional desires or pleasures. By doing so, they do not mean to firmly resolve the morality of sex change rather they more or less offer a different way of seeing it. Seeing the motives for and the undertakings of sex change as a *vain* desire, the outset of such decision becomes void in line with the purpose

⁵³ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 63.

of alleviating the conquest of discomfort and pain that which is to be considered as humans' mortal enemy, at least, in light of the premises of the Hellenistic viewpoint.

Just so, every pain is an evil, yet not every pain is of a nature to be avoided on all occasions. By measuring and by looking at the advantages and disadvantages, it is proper to decide all these things; for under circumstances we treat the good as evil, and again, the evil as good.⁵⁴

Humans, as rational beings, are still the ones accountable for their chosen actions. In the end, it is still the individual doer of the act who will pay for the consequences of such deliberations whether it leads for the fulfillment of either an egoistic or altruistic happiness or for no flawless causes at all.

⁵⁴ Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, 56.

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