

In your own skin

Even though I am part of the LGBTQ+ community, I've never really been exposed to much of the other letters besides the G. It was really only in my stay in the Loyola Schools that I was able to meet individuals from all over the spectrum and listen to their own unique struggles, triumphs, and heartbreaks. In my stay, I've had particularly close encounters with transgender people because I'm a part of Dollhouse. I've come to learn that transgender is an umbrella term that encapsulates both individuals that don't necessarily identify with their sex assigned at birth, as well as those that don't identify with being independently male or female. My friends have then made me realize how the notion of gender identity being predetermined by our sex assigned at birth is quite outdated. We've outgrown the idea that biological sex and gender are one-to-one correspondent; they actually exist on their own separate planes altogether.

To argue the validity of the transgender identity, I'd like to use Eduardo Calasanz's arguments in "My Body". Calasanz explains that there exists a paradox between an individual's body and soul, where an individual both "is" their body (body and soul are one attuned entity), and at the same time "has" their body (body is separate from soul). For trans-people, however, this becomes difficult because they are born with a body their souls feel a great disconnect with. In order to remedy this, there are options such as sexual reassignment surgery, hormones, and even cross-dressing. These are options which help a trans-soul feel more acquainted with their body. Even so, people tend to question the insistence of changing one's body or appearance. The concept of the body being intermediary as discussed by Calasanz helps us understand this further.

On one hand, the body is a means for us to connect with the world; it is how we interact with other people in our daily encounters with them. Since souls themselves cannot interact with each other, bodies step in as the middle ground. Bodies are the vessel which individuals open themselves up to interactions with other people and the rest of the world in order to make their experience of the world, uniquely their own. For transgender people, they are robbed of this opportunity because of the great disconnect which their souls and bodies have, so in order to retrieve that experience, they have to act accordingly.

The second meaning of intermediary which Calasanz points out is that the body helps us "experience the world as separate from me". Since we can differentiate ourselves from other people, ourselves from the world, and ourselves from objects, we get to come to an experience that is completely our own. We get our sense of identity specifically from the separation of "I" and "other". As for the transgendered experience, because they cannot locate their souls fully within their own body, it becomes more difficult to distinguish themselves and thus becomes harder to see where they fit in the bigger picture of society. How can a fully solidified understanding of an "I" be developed if one's soul is at a constant disconnect with their own body? This disconnect hampers a person's ability to distinguish themselves as a fully unique individual.

With these two meanings of intermediary, we can see how important the actual body is for a human while they are on this earth. Not only is the body our way of interacting with

others, but it is also where we get our sense of identity. It is only by establishing a connection between our mind and body that we can wholeheartedly encounter the world. Which is why, if someone feels that sexual reassignment surgery, hormones, or cross-dressing might help them experience the world to its fullest, who are we to stop them from doing so? It is because their body is both their responsibility and their unique experience which should give them the agency to decide how they would want to present themselves. This is not to condone any behavior that treats bodies as merely an object that can be replaced or discarded when we don't want it anymore, but more to explain that because our bodies are the way which we experience the world, if the current state of our bodies hamper our connection with it, then we should have to option to adjust it in a way which would allow us to experience the world in its fullest. Everybody deserves to be comfortable in their own skin.