



Exploring Transsexualism

Colette Chiland

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In the case of sexuality and gender, can whatever is in the mind be changed, perhaps with help of psychotherapy or otherwise, rather than opt for external surgery? Is psychotherapeutic treatment powerless in the case of transsexuals? This intriguing volume is a work by a French psychoanalyst with extensive experience of working with transsexuals. It is a useful addition to the debate on transsexuals and the definitions of sex and gender.

The word "transsexualism" was coined in 1953, although transsexuals and intersexed people had existed long before that, and surgery to reassign one's sex is a relatively recent phenomenon. Transsexuals feel that the opposite sex to their biological one is their true identity - their true body and self. The idea of "hormonal and surgical sex reassignment" appeals to them; it would biologically put right what they already know to be right and true in their minds. The author discusses the problems of "reassigning" one's sex and argues that surgery cannot fix the situation.

Transsexualism as a result of interaction with environment in infancy is seen as a more shameful option compared to something biological happening to the body while in utero. If this condition is seen as something merely biological, it does not mark the person in question as psychologically ill or unbalanced. This introductory text helps in looking at this difficult, even taboo, issue from various angles. It acknowledges the complexity of the subject and warns the readers against judgements being made without knowing the full story behind the person.

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