Your body is a temple

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. — 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Abstract

In *A Secular Age*, Philosopher Charles Taylor describes a set of conditions for modern life that one sees at play in contemporary approaches to human identity, gender, and sexuality. The conditions he identifies are the result of 'subtraction story' that leads to a disenchanted, immanent, universe, that gives rise to a 'buffered self,' producing an individualism where people are freed from a transcendent ordering of the cosmos to pursue their desired *authentic* 'identity' through personal choice. Taylor suggests our buffered selves are left seeking 'fullness' in this immanent frame, while haunted by what has been subtracted. One way he describes the experience of this haunting is as a 'frisson' — a 'skin orgasm.'

This paper suggests that in the technological age of Grindr, Tinder and pornography; things are worse than *A Secular Age* suggests; that technology amplifies the immanent reality of the 'buffered self' and leaves individuals using their bodies to pursue an 'authentic' self that cannot satisfy where sexual 'frisson' is increasingly disconnected from 'fullness' or any sense of the transcendent.

This essay argues that a Christian response to the contemporary debate around sexuality and gender informed by Taylor's is to seek to re-enchant our bodies by creating a new social imaginary, by living and telling an enchanted, subversive, counter-narrative that orients us as embodied characters within the divinely ordered cosmos, where our lives — and sex itself — have a sacramental quality and a transcendent telos. In this story, our bodies are temples where the transcendent and immanent come together as we, in communion, 'image' Christ, telling and living his story.

The new media social imaginary

Charles Taylor published *A Secular Age* in 2007. In 2007 the first iPhone was released, YouTube was two years old, and Netflix had just begun streaming after years as a DVD mail-out service. Facebook was three years old. Same sex marriage was legal in just the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada, and South Africa. Internet pornography was already a billion dollar industry, but increased uptake of 'smart phones' would profoundly shift its consumption and social effects.[1] Location based 'gay hookup' phone app Grindr launched in 2009; Tinder, a hookup app for heterosexuals, launched in 2012. Since Taylor published, the landscape has substantially shifted; our 'social imaginary' has changed.

Despite these changes, Taylor's thesis accounts for modern views about the body, our pursuit of fullness, and the way technology accelerates an 'excarnation' process. The modern view of the body, sexuality and gender, has been 'disenchanted' although we still experience a haunting 'frisson' in moments that hint of transcendence.

While Taylor has much to contribute specifically on gender,[2] I will focus specifically on sexual relationships, and the experience of oneness and pleasure as they relate to fullness. I will argue that Christians must pursue the re-enchantment of the body, through providing an alternative vision of the relationship between sex and fullness. While I will not see Taylor's insights framing our contribution to contemporary political debates,[3] they encourage Christians to form an alternative 'social imaginary;' a polis that embodies a coherent and compelling vision shaped by its story; a community that re-enchants and re-sacramentenalises our bodies and how

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[1] Covenant Eyes, 'Porn Stats: 250+ facts, quotes, and statistics about pornography use (2018 Edition),' retrieved online 12 July 2019, http://www.covenanteyes.com/lemonade/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/covenant-eyes-porn-stats-2018-edition.pdf, 4, 11

[2] specifically through his work on embodiment, which would provide a consistent framework for addressing both gender and sexuality.

[3] I'm also keen to avoid what James Davison Hunter describes as the 'politicisation of everything.'

we use them as 'temples of the Holy Spirit.'[4] Without such an investment our contributions to debates will be rendered implausible, and may compound the distance between Christians and the world.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples? A 'cosmic' understanding of our embodied life together

The Apostle Paul urges Christians in sex-saturated Corinth to avoid sexual immorality, because as believers in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit, they are 'temples' of the living God and belong to him.[5]

In the ancient world Temples functioned as portals between heaven and earth; an overlapping of the transcendent and the immanent realms, where the divine would interact with the world.[6] As God's Spirit dwells in human bodies, the notion of temple is democratized, providing a 'sacred' vision of the body as it occupies space that might otherwise be 'secular'; this there is a sacred call on our bodies sexually, not just individually, but in community. This sacred call is also found in the *telos* for humanity embedded in the "image of God." Humans are imprinted with God's image, such that we belong to him,[7] and have the created purpose of 'imaging' or representing him in the world.[8] Christian bodies have been 'redeemed;'[9] recreated and recast as 'God's handiwork' (ποίημα) created to do good works.[10] This Greek word only occurs in one other place in the New Testament, where it describes how

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[4] The term 'social imaginary' is Taylor's, 'plausibility structure' is from Peter Berger. The concepts are not totally interchangeable, though they overlap. C. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 171-172, P.L Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion,* Open Road Media. Kindle Edition, 6-7, 45, P.L Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Open Road Media). Kindle Edition. 154-159

[5] 1 Corinthians 6:19

[6] J.H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, (Downers Grove, IVP, 2009), Kindle Edition, Location 676-727

[7] Genesis 1:26-28, Matthew 22:20

[8] R. Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and its Inversion*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, (Downers Grove, Intervarsity Press, 2015), 59-75

[9] 1 Corinthians 6:19

[10] Ephesians 2:10

what has been made had a created purpose, or *telos*, to 'reveal the divine nature and character of God.'[11]

Temples and god-images were part of the architecture of belief, or 'social imaginary' from the Ancient Near East, through to the Roman empire, where temples and images (including coins) were part of the 'enchanted' fabric of life, reinforcing belief that the state was a manifestation of divine will and heavenly order.[12] For Christians, the call to be both 'temples' and 'images,' as 'the body,'[13] was a call to a new social imaginary; an architecture supporting Christian belief. This required an *ethos* consistent with the story of Christianity; the Gospel of Jesus, the true image of the invisible God.[14] This 'purpose' also goes beyond 'representation' of God to include an expansive 'mission' to see God's presence and 'fullness' spread throughout the cosmos as it is reconciled in Christ.[15]

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[11] Romans 1:20

[12] See J. Watts, 'Story, List, Sanction: A Cross Cultural Strategy of Ancient Persuasion,' *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks,* ed. C. Lipson and R. Binkley (Albany, SUNY Press, 2004), 197 , J.W. Watts, "Ritual Rhetoric in Ancient Near Eastern Texts," in Ancient Non-Greek Rhetorics, ed. C. Lipson and R. Binckley, (West Lafayette, Parlor Press, 2009), 41, P.A. Bird, 'Male and Female He Created Them: Genesis 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,' *I Studied Inscriptions From Before The Flood: Ancient Near Eastern Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. R.S Hess and D.T. Tsumura, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1994)*,* 338, M.B Dick, 'Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image,' *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, Ed. M.B. Dick, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1999), 8, J.M Miller, 'In the "Image" and "Likeness" of God,' *JBL*, 91.3 (S 1972), 289- 304, 296, I.J. Winter, 'Idols of the King: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action In Ancient Mesopotamia,' *JORS*, 6.1, (Winter 1992), 13-42, 13-30, P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. Shapiro, (Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 1990), 3-4, 54-57, 129, 159-161, 235-236, 297, 336, S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1984), 65-72, 107-108, 234, 239-248. It's indulgent, but see also N. Campbell, 'Plundering Gold From Egypt,' 2014, retrieved online 15 July 2019, http://st-eutychus.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Plundering-the-Gold-of-the-Egyptians.pdf, 5-10

[13] 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 2:4-10, Romans 12:1 is also interesting here in its shift from the plural 'offer yourselves" to the singular "as a living sacrifice".

[14] Colossians 1:15-23, 3:1-15

[15] Consider how the 'cultural mandate' of Genesis 1:28 is caught up by the 'Great Commission' of Matthew 28, and how both anticipate the redemptive, reconciling, re-creating work of the son (Colossians 1:15-23), with the ultimate merging of heavens and earth as one giant temple (Revelation 21-22). G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, (Downers Grove, IVP, 2004), 29, 50-80 argues that the earth itself was established as a 'cosmic temple' and the story of the Bible is the story of that temple being re-inaugurated in the new creation but also of 'messianic' figures or leaders building altars and temples as 'sacred space' (96-108), essentially creating sacred social imaginaries via architecture and 'cultic' practice. For more on the earth as a temple, and the garden as its sanctuary, see J.H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible,* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2000), and J.H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*

This produces a sexual ethic. In a Christian marriage both bodies, male and female, belong to God, and to one another, and ar*e both* united to Jesus as 'one flesh' by the Spirit, *and* in the body of Christ.[16] Our sexuality and our gender were designed to 'image God' and are transformed by the Spirit to reflect 'the image of the son' as we worship God together.[17] There is a corporate, interdependent, aspect both to bearing the image of the triune God, and to our role as the temple, and thus to experiencing true human ends, or "fullness."[18]

Our experience of life in 'the cosmos' — including moments of 'frisson' (defined below) — are designed to reveal the divine nature and character of God to us; while our lives together as created things (people) within the cosmos, including our sexuality and our gender expression, are also to be aligned to this telos; revealing God to the world. Further, our sexuality and gender — whether offered in marriage, or in celibacy, point to the 'marriage' or 'one flesh' union between Christ and his bride, the church.[19] The Christian story has a *high* view of sex, gender, and marriage because it sees us living as embodied characters within this story of the creation, fall, redemption and consummation of the cosmos in, through, with and for Jesus.[20] I place this account here because it is a story we will return to after exploring the 'subtraction' story of the secular age.[21]

Taylor's Diagnosis — Immanent temples and fluid sexuality

Taylor's thesis is that as we moderns have stripped the cosmos of enchantment and a divinely ordained 'order.' We have created the 'buffered self,' who now constructs

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[16] 1 Corinthians 6:15-7:4, 12:12-27

[17] Romans 8:28-30, Further, when we return from idolatrous worship (ἐλάτρευσαν, Romans 1:25) to true worship (λατρείαν, Romans 12:1) we 'offer our bodies' (plural) as 'a living sacrifice' (singular). Idolatrous worship deforms us individually and corporately (Romans 1:21-32), true worship and the 'renewing of our minds' by the Spirit transforms us from the "patterns of the world" (Romans 12:1-2).

[18] Walton, *Lost World*, Location 201-219, B.C Benz, 'The Ethics of the Fall: Restoring the Divine Image through the Pursuit of Biblical Wisdom,' *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 2016, Volume 46 Number 4 Pages 191–199, 192

[19] Ephesians 5:21-33, Galatians 3:28, Revelation 19:6-8

[20] Colossians 1:15-23

[21] Taylor, *A Secular Age, 157*

meaning from *within* rather than *without*.[22] This has involved a shifting 'social imaginary' from the Mediaeval age and order where transcendent and immanent reality overlapped in a "fully-realised" way such that the material world supported belief in the transcendent, to our modern view of a universe largely closed off from transcendence.[23] This shift caused the re-imagination, or re-imaging, of the 'self' and allowed the construction of our own 'personal' identity, as we pursue fullness in the material universe rather than an enchanted cosmos.[24] This re-ordered the moral landscape around sexuality and gender.[25]

The 'subtraction story' Taylor tells is not simply the result of a scientific or materialist takeover. Christianity itself, through projects of reform, is also responsible.[26] The process of "Reform" within the church that declared every inch of the saeculum sacred created the conditions for disenchantment (if everywhere is sacred, then nowhere really is).[27] The democratization of the priesthood had a similar effect.[28] Both moves collapsed the distance between the eschatological city of God and the "earthly" city,[29] leading to an elevation of reason and natural law by Christians, where natural, not 'sacred,' arguments were mounted for Christian sexual morality, and the view of the body generally.[30] A further turn in this subtraction story elevated our desires in the pursuit of fullness so that "sexual fulfillment, instead of being condemned as a path to perdition, is now seen as one of our greatest joys."[31] If Christian sexual ethics are natural and universal, not spiritual,

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[22] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 8, 15
[23] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 161-164, on this order as a 'plausibility structure' that answered the question 'who am I' for an individual in the hierarchy to such an extent that the question was not even conceivable, see Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 164.
[24] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 149
[25] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 157.
[26] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 157-158, in part because he traces a development from the Reformation and its narrowing of the horizon of relationship with God to a 'judicial-penal' framework, which he sees giving rise to deism, and which then sees deism leading to exclusive naturalism at 233, on the reduction of morality to the immanent, see 18
[27] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 264-266
[28] where all people were able to reflect the image of God rather than just a sacred reresentative, though this is a return of sorts to the Biblical story outlined above.
[29] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 735
[30] Taylor, *A Secular Age, 252,* 502
[31] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 252

it is hard to justify any 'essentially Christian,' approach to sex and the body.[32] This subtraction also shrinks the "horizon of transformation" (any eschatological horizon, or supernatural telos) from immanent life, leaving the modern self with a "telos of autarky."[33]

The buffered self emerged alongside a view of the body as the 'private property' of a person's inner self or desires; a view developed from Locke's use of natural law. [34] As the 'owner' of one's now liberated self, the individual in Taylor's "age of authenticity" is freed to pursue 'fullness' through choice,[35] typically ordered towards desire and "sensuality."[36] This cosmic and personal shift has implications for how physical space works. Under the old social imaginary, the physical architecture of the church, and the public 'festive' provided communal sacramental experiences. The new order features communal public experiences that produce 'fusion;' Taylor suggests these temporarily de-buffer the self, involving something like a shared *religious* experience akin to worship,[37] brought about through embodied identity,

[32] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 502, Taylor sees this coupled with narratives of self-realisation and sexual fulfillment combining to repel people from the Christian position

[33] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 138, 261, M.P Jensen, 'In Spirit and in Truth': Can Charles Taylor Help the Woman At the Well Find Her Authentic Self?,' *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 21.3, (2008), 325-341, 340, where Taylor, in his 'ethics of authenticity' speaks of a 'horison of significance' he is talking about our human need to worship some transcendent other; a stream of thought picked up by J.K.A Smith in his Cultural Liturgies series and *You Are What You Love*.

[34] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 126-127, 159-171, 542, J. Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 16, document 3, chapter 5, 1689, retrieved online 1 July 2019, http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s3.html, no pages. "every Man has a property in his own person. This no body has any right to but himself," also, J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Wiley), Kindle Edition, 6-7, observes the transforming of public and private space that happens alongside the re-ordering of society that Taylor describes; where the 'common man' became the "private man" (and the ordinary soldier is labeled as a "private") while those still attached to the feudal system — kings and lords were 'public' figures capable of representing a system larger than themselves; as people and societies were 'democratised;' as people became autonomous owners of their bodies as 'private' property we became free to rule our own 'privates' as soldiers in a quest to define and represent ourselves in public, Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 484

[35] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 135, 559-560, at 543-544 he makes the point that the sloughing off of the transcendent is not 'necessary' though it is possible, and the 'immanent frame' becomes 'common' or the default social imaginary in the modern west, though "Some of us want to live it as open to something beyond; some live it as closed," at 550 he says either position requires a leap of faith.

[36] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 299, 478-479, Taylor notes (480) that this 'affirmation of sensitivity' and reduction of aspiration to "consumer choice" is a caricature of what is slightly more complicated. It certainly can be viewed in these terms in some cases.

[37] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 480-482,

and shared consumer choices. We are linked through and to "some higher world," even if that's the world of "Nike running shoes and star athletes."[38]

Individuals become not temples to transcendence, but 'private properties' with street frontage; publicly representing whatever gods the individual chooses.[39] Identity is something performed as an expression of 'private' ownership of the body; this includes how an individual engages their private parts in privacy; that is, the performance includes one's gender and sexual identities.[40] According to Taylor (and also Habermas) this subtraction story narrowed the field for intimacy to marriage and family; and this gave rise to a desire for privacy. Marriage as the designated field for intimacy, especially sexual intimacy, becomes 'essential' to a full human life.[41] According to Taylor we now 'keep our bodies to ourselves,' except in private; 'mixing fluids' with strangers (whether via a shared cup, or the intermingling of persons) was once normal, this becomes increasingly objectionable amongst moderns, yet these boundaries disappear amongst lovers in private, "Love-making itself is a mixing of fluids with abandon."[42] According to Taylor, the 'buffered self' steers clear of this 'world of abandon,' its barriers work against "physical desires" and "fascination with the body," but these barriers also buffer against others.[43] We will see below how at least one force — the combination of hookup culture and technology — is dealing differently when it comes to the 'mixing of fluids' and the 'private' field of marriage; but sex without intimacy is perhaps even more 'buffered' or buffering than the sex Taylor describes. This evolution is part of an outworking of

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[38] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 483

[39] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 135-142, recognition itself, in the development of identity is not *new,* the pursuit of identity and glory is ancient, but that glory often came as a result of suppressing desire or emotions in favour of reason, control, or principle; the 'modern age,'

[40] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 485

[41] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 140

[42] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 139-140

[43] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 142

developments from the 60s-70s where some rebelled against "the repression of the body by reason" in favour of the "fullness of sensuality."[44]

When the world was viewed as 'enchanted' it wasn't simply that religious belief was plausible, the world was a stomping ground for spiritual beings, demons lurked terrifyingly in the wilderness. Taylor describes a phenomenon where what was once terrifying is now entertaining; our buffered selves sit safely in the cinema participating in horror to experience 'thrills,' or what Taylor calls "*frisson*" — a term describing a phenomenon colloquially called 'a skin orgasm.'[45] The sublime can also give us a *frisson*.[46] The experience of this 'haunting' *frisson* may then be a nod to transcendent fullness, or the overlap of heavens and earth. Perhaps the best experience of sexuality the buffered self can hope for — buffered sex — is not immanent fullness, but "frisson." While sex itself was meant to be enchanting; sacramental even, buffered sex is only skin deep, or at best 'cross pressured' and its significance contested.[47] A 'sacramental' view of sex will not, by itself, produce re-enchantment, in fact, Taylor describes how church reform projects disenchanted sex; first because the medieval church taught sex was for procreation, not recreation, and then because the reformed tradition "put a damper on sexual pleasure" by inviting married couples to have sex for the glory of God.[48]

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[44] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 476-477, this represents a further shift from Brooks' 'BoBos' who pursue sex with 'earnest concern for self-improvement.

[45] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 337, 741, L. Harrison, P. Loui, 'Thrills, chills, frissons, and skin orgasms: toward an integrative model of transcendent psychophysiological experiences in music,' *Frontier Psychol*ogy, 23 July 2014, retrieved online 15 July 2019, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00790, no pages. This article explores the way 'frisson' and 'transcendence,' it says, of *frisson*, "It affects different parts of the body depending on the person and circumstances of induction, and retains similar sensory, evaluative, and affective biological and psychological components to sexual orgasm," and that the centres in the brain that fire for visceral pleasures are fired by "transcendent psychophysiological" musical experiences producing a 'skin orgasm' or frisson.

[46] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 337

[47] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 636, Taylor points out that the modern landscape is "cross pressured," and contested. He suggests his framework is not identifying a struggle between " two protagonists, but rather as a three-cornered, even perhaps four-cornered battle," At 645 he shows how this affects sexuality when he says for some, "intense and profound sexual fulfillment focuses us powerfully on the exchange within the couple" creating attachment to "what is privately shared."

[48] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 645

Taylor describes a process where this buffered self, because the body increasingly takes a back seat to reason, and later to desire, and 'choice' becomes 'excarnate,' we are, he says "more disembodied beings than our ancestors." [49] Excarnation is another product of the church; especially as Christianity moves from emphasising embodied practice to belief.[50] According to Taylor, excarnation leads to a "repression of sexuality," and avoiding, or being too timid around, questions of sexual identity."[51]

For buffered selves operating within the social imaginary of the immanent frame, the sex act has been disenchanted; still haunted perhaps, and a grounds for 'frisson' that might point towards fullness and enchantment, while at the same time, gender and sexuality have replaced the spiritual as drivers of the self and shapers of identity, such that individuals become 'temples' or images of some authentic vision of the self, drawn from within. This disenchantment of the cosmos, its new "social imaginary," and the elevation of individual choice does not leave just one 'scientific' alternative to religion, but provides a multiplication of possible choices and social imaginaries, that Taylor calls the 'nova effect.'[52] This means groups debating sexuality and gender, who fail to take the plurality of social imaginaries into account, will talk past each other, and that the 'battle of ideas' is actually a contest of imaginaries. A Christian response to this new vision must chart a path back to an understanding of embodiment consistent with the theology outlined above; this will require a renewed, compelling, social imaginary. There is, however, another factor pushing modern humans towards disembodiment and disenchantment. Technology.

The disenchanting, buffering, power of technology

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[49] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 141, 288, 293, 554, 612-615, Taylor speaks of the relationship between the rise of reason and the falling away of the body, but also the counter rise of morality based on emotion, and these processes leading to excarnation, at 554 Taylor points out how Christianity itself became excarnate the more it transferred from 'enfleshed' forms of religious life to religion being "in the head."

[50] Taylor, *A Secular Age, 553-554,* N. R Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*, (Baker Publishing Group), Kindle Edition, 24, 35-41, 196, 236, suggests this brings a new 'gnostic' approach to life and the body that applies directly to sexuality and gender.

[51] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 771

[52] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 299, 302, 531, *556-557*

Taylor acknowledges that our use of technology, or tools, can move us away from the 'lived body' aiding excarnation.[53] Part of this move happens via media, as we alienate ourselves from 'real fleshy reality;' seeing persons presented in virtual, disembodied, images.[54] Technology, as it shapes the 'buffered' self, especially around the area of sex and dating, has the capacity not to leave us as 'buffered' selves but 'buffering selves' — always loading, but never fully realised. Technology, especially pornography, online dating, and hookup apps have accelerated our disenchanted, mechanical, approach to sex; aiding the pursuit of 'frisson,' but pushing us further away from fullness — both the full, enchanted, potential of human sexuality, and its heavenly telos.

Media ecologist Marshall McLuhan, whose insights were shaped by the maxims 'you become what you worship' and 'the media is the message' saw technology having an 'ecological' or systemic effect, transforming, or distorting the people who use it; new media alters the 'psychic and social complex,' or the social imaginary.[55] According to McLuhan, technology operates as an extension of the body, and new technology, as it is assimilated into human practices "nourish" human motivation and values, and "reform" human outlooks.[56] Commentator Andrew Sullivan notes that technology — particularly the smart phone — 'ratchet' up the conditions of Taylor's subtraction story and further move the modern social imaginary away from the conditions of religious belief; he says the smart phone doesn't just threaten and re-shape our practices and our minds, but also our souls.[57]

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[53] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 741, Taylor sees both instrumentalism and our use of instruments move us away from the "network of agape" which is only "created in enfleshment."
[54] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 740-741
[55] M. McLuhan, The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion, (Oregan, Wipf and Stock, 2010), 162, M. McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1994) First edition 1964, 21, 46
[56] M. McLuhan 'Roles, Masks, and Performances,' NLH, 2.3, (Spring, 1971), 517-531, retrieved http://www.mcluhanonmaui.com/2011/06/roles-masks-and-performances-by.html, no page
[57] A. Sullivan, 'I Used to Be a Human Being,' *New York Magazine,* September 19 2016, retrieved online 15 July 2019, http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2016/09/andrew-sullivan-my-distraction-sickness-and-yours.html

Technology now shapes how humans experience sexuality. Hook-up culture and visually based online dating platforms have developed alongside the disenchantment of marriage and sexuality. The buffering of the self was accelerated by such technology, which disembodies our experience of dating and relationships, disconnects us from physical relationship networks, and even 'place' (though location based dating apps 'augment' physical space).[58] Most heterosexual and homosexual couples now meet online.[59]

While 'hooking up' is easier than ever; this social change has resulted in less sexual connection between people, not more, and thus, if the modern self increasingly sees sex as a basis for fullness, the modern self is likely to be disappointed.[60] Sexual 'frisson' is increasingly a one-person affair, again, more technology fuelled buffering. Mark Regnerus is one of many voices suggesting that pornography is transforming the fabric of relationships as individuals turn to pornography for sexual satisfaction.[61] Regnerus suggests that in economic terms, social and technological

[58] M. Rosenfeld, 'Disintermediating your friends,' 6, A. Ansari, *Modern Romance: An Investigation*, (Penguin Books Ltd). Kindle Edition, 31, 108, 245-246, Ansari notes that part of the 'disembodying' affect of online dating has users spending more time trawling potential dates online than on dating in the flesh, he also observes that location based dating platforms represent a return to the hyper-local approach to dating that was common generations ago.
[59] J.R Garcia, C. Reiber, S.G Massey, A.M Merriweather, 'Sexual Hookup Culture: A Review,' *Review of General Psychology,* 2012, 1-16, 'the vast majority' of 'emerging adults' participated in hook-ups; and this cohort provided a fertile market for the development of such technology. M. Rosenfeld, "How Tinder and the dating apps Are and are Not changing dating and mating in the U.S.", Stanford University, 2017, retrieved online 13 July 2019, 16, 20, found that users who use Tinder to hook up met an average of five partners in a year. M. Rosenfeld, R.J Thomas, S. Hausen, 'Research Note: Disintermediating your friends', Stanford University, 9 July 2019, retrieved online 13 July 2019, https://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenfe/Rosenfeld_et_al_Disintermediating_Friends.pdf, 4, 7, M.J Rosenfeld, "Marriage, Choice, and Couplehood in the Age of the Internet," *Sociological Science*, 2017, 4, 490-510, 492, 495, 504-505, R.A Ferdman, 'How well online dating works, according to someone who has been studying it for years,' *The Washington Post,* 23 March 2016, retrieved online 15 July 2019, no pages, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/03/23/the-truth-about-online-dating-according-to-someone-who-has-been-studying-it-for-years/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e33dfe6044ed, R.A Ferdman, 'There are only three ways to meet anyone anymore,' *The Washington Post*, 8 March 2016, no pages, retrieved online 15 July 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/03/08/how-much-life-has-changed-in-one-incredible-chart-about-dating/?utm_term=.1538974b7aca
[60] M. Regnerus, 'The Death of Eros,' *First Things*, 276 Oct 2017, 15-17, 15, he also points out the "vast majority of sex happens within long term, well defined, relationships," a point also explored in G. Harrison, A Better Story: God, Sex And Human Flourishing . IVP. Kindle Edition.
[61] M. Regnerus, K. Beaty, 'Sex economics 101: Mark Regnerus, the early-marriage sociologist, shares his latest reasearch on young adults' sexual attitudes and behavior,' *Christianity Today*, 55 no 2 Feb

changes have made marriage more expensive, and sex cheaper: "The cheap sex that was made possible by the Pill, further discounted by pornography, and made more efficient by Tinder has proven to be a bad bargain for women, leaving them (and, in turn, men) lonelier and less connected than they once were."[62]

Social commentator David Brooks sees this technological approach to sexuality "commodifying people" and disenchanting life.[63] He suggests the mechanism of technology is antithetical to love itself, and that we must take "the enchantment leap" if we want to move towards something more like fullness.[64] In Taylorian terms the 'enchantment leap' on questions of sexuality, gender, and even how we view the body, is a 'leap of faith' — but so too is to continue the process of excarnation.[65] Brooks said love requires not a 'buffered' self but a vulnerability that "lowers the boundaries between self and self,"[66] and that "building a capacity for enchantment," is a "fervent need" in a "technical culture" where the institutions that support enchantment have been marginalised.[67] It is to this task we now turn.

A Christian response to sex in public: from 'sex has a price tag' to 'sex has a telos'

Christian contributions to debates around gender and sexuality have tended towards negativity on sex and the body. Christian contributions are either 'natural

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2011, 26-28, 27-28, Regnerus, like Taylor sees an emerging pattern of 'serial monogamy', A Secular, 496

[62] M. Regnerus, 'The Death of Eros,' 15, 17, also, S.E Rhoads, 'Hookup Culture: The High Costs of a Low Price For Sex,' *Society*. Dec 2012, Vol. 49 Issue 6, 515-519, 516-517 suggests Regnerus' negative account doesn't go far enough.

[63] D. Brooks, 'The Devotion Leap,' *The New York Times*, 22 Jan 2015, retrieved online 15 Jul 2019, no pages, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/23/opinion/david-brooks-the-devotion-leap.html?_r=2

[64] Brooks (ibid), this point is consistent with Taylor, see see A. Wilkinson, R. Joustra, *How to Survive the Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith, and Politics at the End of the World,* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2016), Kindle Edition, 100-101, citing Taylor's *The Malaise of Modernity,* (Toronto, House of Anansi Press, 1991), 43.

[65] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 550

[66] Brooks, 'Devotion Leap,' Taylor identifies the same issue and calls for the transformation of our desires, "What have to be transformed are the desires themselves. Sexual desire has to grow into a more profound, more fully engaging love; self-affirmation into a devotion to those we love, sympathy has to become more awake to the real predicament of those around us, and so on." Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 646

[67] Brooks, 'Devotion Leap,' we live in "a culture and an online world that encourages a very different mind-set; in a technical culture in which humanism, religion and the humanities, which are the great instructors of enchantment, are not automatically central to life."

law' driven, or fail to account for the modern, immanent, social imaginary,[68] and so will fail, both because they reinforce the divide Taylor identifies, and continue to 'disenchant' sex by focusing on immanent natural law, or purity based 'price tag' arguments for sexual piety (whether focused on disease or moral purity).[69] Such contributions are too often political, without noting the shifting architecture of belief described by Taylor.[70] An effective contribution to contemporary debates — whether within the church, or in public — requires a renewed, enchanted, social imaginary; that might captivate.[71] Our task then is to determine what shape such an attempt should take; looking either to an ideal moment in history, or a coherent Christian story like the one outlined above.[72]

Taylor gives reason to believe that such a project would be worthwhile, he describes a "malaise of modernity;" the feeling that the disenchanted world is 'empty,' and can't actually deliver fullness.[73] He says, that happiness pursued as an end, once realised, delivers a "cosmic yawn." This observation parallels with any treatment of orgasm as the end of human sexuality; that might justify probing through 'frisson' towards fullness.[74] Many technology users — whether through hookup apps, or pornography, are yawning.

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[68] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 550

[69] On moral, or theological, purity, see Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 496, the reference to the 'price tag' approach is to an abstinence only video I once had to watch titled Sex Has A Price Tag, a video is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycf-y9rSx5U

[70] J.D Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, (Oxford University Press), Kindle Edition, 102-103, 185-186, Hunter describes the modern "politicization of everything," calling for Christians to imaginatively 'decouple the public from the political' so to "open up other options for engaging the world... that do not require the state, the law, or a political party."

[71] Taylor, *A Secular Age, 549*, describes the effect of strong imaginaries; rather than being threatened by those, the church might create its own, *556-557*, then describes the sort of world that might invoke transcendence even within the immanent frame.

[72] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 734-735, Taylor doesn't believe the answer for this renewed imaginary lies in the past, in Christendom, because there's a question of whether we can actually go back, not just whether we'd want to if we could.

[73] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 302, 309, This malaise involves the haunting sense that "we are missing something" or "living behind a screen" — he is not referring to technology and its distorting effects directly, but rather that we see through a glass darkly

[74] Taylor, *A Secular Age, 717, 721*, part of this is because happiness is 'temporal' while joy, even immanent joy, strives towards the eternal.

There are some related suggestions Taylor's framework offers may aid building a re-enchanted social imaginary consistent with the story above, and so shape a fresh approach to debates around sexuality and gender. First is to tell the story that gives us back our bodies, 'incarnate' and re-enchanted, by connecting 'frisson' to fullness.[75] This will rechart a sacramental 'sacred geography' of the cosmos, our bodies, reaffirming the eschatological telos of all things "in Christ," but also rediscovering an 'immanent' sense of God's presence "in his creation;"[76] and in our bodies not as private property, or secular space, but as temples of the Holy Spirit.[77] This means recasting experiences of 'frisson' or orgasm, in our sexual union as anticipations of the fullness of the new creation and the consummation of our union with Christ, our "erotic desire and the love of God," our experience of intimacy or oneness in sex to our union with Christ.[78] This also means articulating a sexual ethic that is distinctively Christian (and limited to Christians).[79] Second, is to adopt an approach not just focused on 'stamping out something' negative, 'ending' one's sex life or expression of a gender identity, but on growth as characters formed in the Christian story.[80] Third, is the need for an embodied form of Christian "communion of the saints" in a 'network of agape;' an 'incarnate' vision of life with God and each other

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[75] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (University of Notre Dame Press), Third Edition Kindle Edition, 213, 215-216, 220-221, 225, 263. MacIntyre suggested combating modernity's "bureaucratic individualism" with a community participating in a counter-narrative that provides a character-defining telos. He said "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'", also Wilkinson and Joustra, *How to Survive the Apocalypse*, 184-185.

[76] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 288, 613, 763, 766, the rehabilitation of the body is a "felt need" in the west, and while not suppressing the sexual or sensual desires feels like an undoing of excarnation, it's only partial because it does nothing about disenchantment, Taylor sees the "aesthetic experience" and embodied feeling as part of the resistance to excarnation because it can "open us to something higher." This might include a rediscovery of the place of the sacraments themselves, as per the James K.A Smith project.

[77] Walton, *The Lost World*, 735-805 argues from Genesis 1, that the cosmos should actually be viewed as a temple, D.M Coulter, 'Lust and Augustine,' *First Things Web Exclusive*, 12 July 2018, retrieved online 15 July 2019, https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/07/lust-and-augustine, says there is a "sacramentalism to creation" that Augustine sees connected to a telos built in to matter itself (cf Romans 1:20).

[78] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 767

[79] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 553, D.M Coulter, 'Lust and Augustine,' *First Things Web Exclusive*, 12 July 2018, retrieved online 15 July 2019, https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/07/lust-and-augustine, G. Harrison, *A Better Story: God, Sex And Human Flourishing*, (IVP), Kindle Edition. A natural frame — especially natural law — would reproduce the disenchanting that happened first time around.

[80] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 646

with coherent communal practices different to the world;[81] these include a "reclaiming of the body and its pleasures,"[82] and a renunciation of desire that reflects the Christian narrative,[83] but must also involve a resistance to the deforming power of technology. These are the elements of a new social imaginary that would make a Christian stance on sexuality and gender at least internally plausible, and potentially externally persuasive.[84] What this describes, of course, is the church.[85] As Hunter puts it: "formation into a vision of human flourishing requires intentionality and the social, economic, intellectual, and cultural resources of a healthy, mutually dependent, and worshipping community provided for Christians by the church. Thus when the theologians... speak of the church as a polis or altera civitas, marked by a distinct narrative recounted in distinct practices, a distinct telos whose form and substance is defined by the coming kingdom, and the presence of the Spirit at work among believers through Word and sacrament, they are gesturing in precisely this direction, and their instincts are exactly right."[86]

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[81] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 553-554, 739, 751-752, 754, 771
[82] Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 507
[83] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 644, 648, 766-767, at 772 Taylor suggests the Reformation, in trying to 're-enchant' sex against the backdrop of medieval Christianity, ended up creating a situation where celibate vocations were discredited and renunciation viewed with suspicion as a form of 'madness or self-mutilation.' This must be a non-platonic or Gnostic renunciation, that acknowledges the good of that being sacrificed for a greater thing as a response to the self-emptying of God in Christ. Reclaiming the body in this fashion has the advantage of resonating with the desires of moderns.
[84] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 263, Hunter says the plausibility of the Christian faith for believers requires a community, the church, a cultural context where "meaning, purpose, beauty, and belonging are possible," while persuading others depends "on a social environment in which faith—any faith—is plausible."
[85] Hunter, *To Change the World,* 281-283, The church is this community; the 'plausibility structure' for Christian belief. Hunter also suggests we, the church, should engage in a period of silence, learning how to enact our faith in public through acts of shalom rather than attempting to pursue shalom through 'political' means, Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 46-47, "The reality of the Christian world depends upon the presence of social structures within which this reality is taken for granted and within which successive generations of individuals are socialized in such a way that this world will be real to them." ultimately the church, is not simply the 'plausibility structure' for Christian belief, to return to a distinction between Taylor and Berger, the church as both community and institution, with its habits and architecture, is part of the social imaginary
[86] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 283

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