

Porn has been readily available in the western world since the 1960's, and as a consequence of today's digital and fast-paced life, intimacy has all but disappeared from the sexual landscape. But now a countertrend is evolving which embraces the total sexual experience with the end goal of reaching...

THE SEXUALLY-COMPETENT HUMAN

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In the 1982 book *Megatrends*, futurist John Naisbitt introduced the “high tech, high touch” theory, which states that the more technological the world becomes, the more of a need we have for touch – personal, human contact. This prediction suggests there should be a balance between tech and touch so technology doesn't come at the cost of human welfare and functionality. Today, stress is a common disorder, but a survey from Brigham Young University in 2015 discovered that loneliness will cost more lives than obesity. These are just two examples of modern lifestyle problems that are due, among other things, to the fact that we live in a digital and technological age with a hectic pace we've never been exposed to before in history.

However, several prominent countertrends have now appeared on the horizon. There has in fact been, for example, a growing interest in yoga and mindfulness, and many individuals are downsizing, moving to the countryside and going on digital detox, silent retreats or mountain treks. It's also evident in the explosive market in recent years for self-help and personal development, along with an overall increase in spirituality. A strong counter-movement is also in full bloom on the job market. According to surveys carried out by the iOpener Institute and others, there's a rising number among the younger generations, also known as Generation Y and Z, that prioritise a meaningful job over a good salary. Values such as freedom, flexibility, passion, growth and authenticity are also important to them. It's a transition from thinking of work as a series of tasks to be solved in order to generate growth to viewing it as an extension of one's identity, allowing one to improve one's skills and realise one's potential.

This is an undeniably narrow view that isn't broadly applicable to the job market or the world order. Nonetheless, it does say something about where our communal mentality is heading in the Western world. The traits that allow the hedonistic god of light, Dionysus, to topple the controlling *ordensmensch*, Apollo, from the throne are slowly beginning to be recognisable.



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On the basis of this rough sketch, with *sexual doing* the dominant trend/culture and *sexual being* a powerful, growing countertrend, we'll turn our attention to intimate affairs of the heart and raise the question: Where exactly do things stand with sexuality and where is it heading?

SEXUAL DOING AND SEXUAL BEING

Photos of a couple kissing and having sex, while gazing in each other's eyes. Fully-developed pubic hair as it looks when no razor blade has visited the region. A cute smiling girl, standing with a towel tied around her waist and voluptuous bare breasts marked by contrasting bikini lines. This was the image of sexuality after pornography was legalised in industrialised countries from the end of the 60s onward.

Since then, the sexual landscape has undergone resounding changes in the Western world. Personal relationships and intimacy have now been edited out of pornos, and what remains are hours of footage of swollen, engorged penises moving in and out of bodily openings with close-ups of ejaculation in and on every imaginable body part.

Surveys from Pew, Gordon, and Price and the Journal of Sex Research show, among other things, that 42 percent of the currently 260 million internet users in the USA watch porno at least once a month, while 46 percent of men and 16 percent of women in the 18-39 age group watch porno on a weekly basis. Pornography doesn't just affect the sexuality in our bedrooms, leading to quickies or an erotic turn-on for liberated couples, but has also seeped out of our TV screens and into society, influencing the way we relate to ourselves, one another and our bodies both physically, emotionally and of course, sexually.

But in opposition to this raw, unromantic vision of sexuality so pervasive in the private and public realms, there's also another movement taking place involving sexual self-realisation, where a person embraces their sexual, erotic self as a part of their existence and identity.

SEXUAL DOING: SEX IS SOMETHING I DO

Sexual doing is defined as a perception of sex as something one "does". It's a sexual practise that's characterised by being focused on the final destination: "I'm aroused, so I do what I know it takes to excite my partner and just focus on achieving a result". The doer is preoccupied with her functionality (is it hard or not? Is it wet or not?). The doer thinks in terms of performance: am I/the other person good or not? It's a physical, corporeal project to have sex, which mainly has one objective: that oneself and one's partner eventually achieve an orgasm, aka "come".

The active doer thinks about herself, that she's "tried everything" since he views sex as something you can make checklists for, marking each item off one at a time when you've "been there and done that".

For the doer, sex is like devouring a burger: "I'm hungry, I'll find some food, I'll eat and become full – until I'm hungry again." Simplicity and the immediate fulfilment of needs take centre stage. Technological sexuality is therefore perfectly suited to the doer since the sexual contact is straightforward. Here, it's possible to create your own (sexual) persona free of charge, and view photos of potential real or virtual partners' sex organs before you need to relate to their gaze, voice or smell. The doer can easily distinguish between sex and love and therefore is not dependant on an emotional and personal connection to have sex.

SEXUAL BEING: MY SEXUALITY IS MY IDENTITY

Alongside sexual doing is sexual being, which regards sex and sexuality as a catalyst for the individual's existential welfare. Enlightened, self-aware sexuality is the foundation. The sexual "be'er" is the person who embraces sexuality as a part of her identity and regards it as an essential part of her persona. It's the person who consciously chooses to create sexual experiences that bring her further and deeper inside himself, who searches for the "rush" of an incredible experience, and uses her sexuality as a source of self-realisation. At the other end of the spectrum, self-

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aware sexuality is seen as a direct source of spiritual enlightenment.

For the “be’er”, the sexual act is like dining in a 5-star restaurant. It’s not just about the caloric intake, but also about the collective experience of guidelines, aesthetics, creativity, fragrances, tastes, etc. – an experience taken in with plenty of sensual attention that can be unforgettable and transformative.

Since sexual being is a way of existing in the world, the “be’er” displays her sexuality through his expressions and behaviour (e.g., choice of clothing, parties, groups, or dancing). The “be’er” can also be found in swinger and BDSM environments, as well as tantra, yoga, and mindfulness groups, since she believes in personal growth through continuous expansion of his boundaries.

LUSTING FOR SEXUAL EXPERIENCES

There are plenty of contrasts and differences between sexual doing and sexual being, which can be seen both in the terminology and the activities. Doing-language is performance-oriented and evaluative (good/bad, could/could not), while being-language is more experience-oriented and descriptive (How did you experience it?, What did you learn about yourself?). In practise, it’s not uncommon for the doer to evaluate the entire sexual act in relation to whether an ejaculation/orgasm was achieved or not, while the “be’er” evaluates the depth of self-insight, transformation, or – for a minority of the fervent devotees – the intensity of contact with something spiritual outside himself.

Both sexual doing and sexual being, therefore, contain a reflective element in their interpretation of sexuality, and it isn’t just the “be’er” who’s on the hunt for experiences. For the doer, the experiences just don’t deal with self-insight and transformation, but rather with enjoyment for enjoyment’s sake. It’s in other words a common characteristic that sex – and thereby, sexual partners – are a means justifying the end when it comes to experiences. This tendency agrees perfectly with a world that’s less and less materially-oriented, where experiences and what they bring are the “new wealth”. Lust doesn’t revolve around material goods any more, but

rather around emotional experiences. Because sexual experiences have plenty of hedonistic, emotional, and transformative potential, it’s plausible that in the future we’ll lust for them above all else.

A SEXUAL SMORGASBORD WITH SERIOUS SEQUELAE

The new technological sex landscape is as mentioned a treasure trove for the doer’s sexuality, since there’s no limit to the number of times she can whet her appetite. And it only gets more uninhibited and wilder. Intelligent sex robots, holographic porn stars, 3D-printed sex organs, haptic technology (sensors and vibrators that can simulate touch), brain chips that can trigger an orgasm at the touch of a cellphone sensor, and especially virtual reality await us or are already here. In the future, sex definitely won’t be boring, but it also won’t be without consequences.

In the USA, a rising number of boys (from as young as 12 years old) and young men suffer from erectile dysfunction – not when they view porno, mind you, but when they’re together with a girl/woman in the real world. This relatively new affliction goes by the name of PIED (Porn-Induced Erectile Dysfunction) and is often contracted several years prior to the start of (physical) sexual activity.

PIED occurs because the brain reacts differently when the individual masturbates to visual stimuli like porno than when having intercourse with a live human being. The body of these victims ceases to cooperate with the mind during real, physical sexual relations. Men who suffer from PIED furthermore say that in order to avoid the problem, they have to fantasise about pornography and depersonalise the person they’re having sex with. Moreover, there’s a general tendency for the young men to expect the women they’re with to act, look, and perform sex like the porn stars they’re accustomed to seeing onscreen. For their part, the young women feel like they need to act and perform like the women in the pornos. Paradoxically enough, technological sexuality can end up hindering the potential for enjoyment and personal enrichment that it was designed to offer.





THE RIGHT TO BE A FREE, SEXUAL BEING

As we established initially, if the individual is successful in achieving self-realisation, then we expect the right to a sexual existence to follow hand-in-hand. Already now, we see an obvious trend as sex-positive movements gain momentum, and women who love sex now embrace their right to be passionate, have multiple lovers and practise sex whenever and with whomever they want. Membership in clubs that provide guidelines for specific sexual practises, such as S&M clubs, is growing. Festivals like Burning Man in the USA and worldwide parties, such as Burlesque, which celebrate open sexuality, are making steady inroads, and revolve around open-minded experiences for the erotically-inclined, as opposed to hormonally-charged “fuckfests”.

Self-realised sexuality is a sign that you have personal strength and are with the times. Taking your sexuality seriously, prioritising it, and assuming your right to be a sexual being can also be seen as a part of a democratic process, where the right of people to express their sexuality is increasingly being given more emphasis. Festivals such as Gay Pride in many of the world’s capitals, some attended by Prime Ministers, the military, and the police, are an example of this.

THE SEXUALLY-COMPETENT PERSON

Sexual doing and sexual being can be seen in many ways as symbols of the body and spirit – two sides to the person that religions have separated for thousands of years with a hierarchy that maintains the superiority of the spirit over the physical body. Personally, we believe the apotheosis is a mixture of the two, i.e., not just doing, not just being, but intertwining the two. That quick blow-job with a Tinder date in a dark alley can be just as satisfying for an individual as a deep, transformative experience. Who says we can’t transfer those fanciful high tech sex encounters to real-life, consciousness-expanding experiences we didn’t previously think were possible?

In the future, the magical elixir that melds technological sexuality

with sexual being will be *self-awareness*. Take a decanter of sexual doing, add a double-shot of consciousness, mix in a little sensual devotion, and you’ve got yourself a veritable snifter of sexual being.

When sex and sexuality become a part of a person’s self-realisation project, sex is no longer something that’s done on autopilot. It is, in the words of sex therapist and TED-star Esther Perels, “a place we visit”. In the future, it’s a place we’ll visit with more devotion to sexuality as a form of energy, self-insight and expansion of our emotional and physical boundaries and unity with ourselves, our partners and ultimately, the universe. Here, the sex robot can be programmed to provide orgasm on command via quick, efficient stimulation of the sex organs one day, and through dominant-submissive role-playing that stimulates self-awareness and insight, the next. Orgasm-fixated sex and the use of VR partners, in other words, is not the same as sexual doing, meaninglessness, or sex without intimacy. It depends on the context and the self-awareness that comes into play.

That the world is adopting more and more technology doesn’t need to mean that it’s becoming more and more inhuman. But it does mean, as we discussed previously, that our needs for human, personal contact become greater.

Sexuality is (or provides the opportunity to be) an inexhaustible source of personal strength, creativity, passion, empathy and trust – traits that will be in high demand on the job market of the future. The mechanical, routine, and administrative work will be taken care of by computers and robots, but the jobs and tasks of the future will increasingly be dependant on human skills and traits. Therefore it’s likely, in the not-so-distant future, that we’ll increasingly come to regard sex and sexuality as a driving force for personal strength, creativity and growth, instead of something we do in a room with the lights out, feel ashamed of or try to control our urges over.

Just as social and emotional skills will be very important resources on the job market of the future, sensuality, intimacy and sexual and erotic skills will also be in high demand. ■