

I. **Simone de Beauvoir, Das andere Geschlecht**
„You’re not born a woman; you become one.”

A woman is born. Her birth tears the umbilical cord, connecting her to a mother’s womb, in half. A first scream erupts, that is, a scream, not yet defined by the restrictive penalty of shame. It is destructive, attracting attention, begging, it leads to being taken safely into caring hands. We must accept that a scream of this kind is genderless. The birth of a *woman* occurs in deafening silence.

“You’re not born a woman; you become one.” Simone de Beauvoir’s quote from “The second sex” evokes the shocking idea, that the female reality of repression, discrimination and hurt is learned, that the notion of femininity merely exists as an extrinsic influence and the female individual adapts to it to become a “woman”. How does this correspond with the development of young women in a patriarchal society? It is important to recognize, that even just the examination of a feminist quote is reserved to positions of privilege and to a small percentage of women whose emancipation is permitted and granted to them. The thought of “permission” in this context sounds infuriating. But it isn’t, once we consider, that permission doesn’t always ensue from the dominant group in a hierarchy.

When speaking of men and women, we speak of power. One of the most terrifying tools of power is neither physical nor psychological violence. The implication of power that spreads into every little crack, fills every tiny loophole in a larger society would be impossible, if its only intermediaries were to be those in power positions, A large group must control themselves. Society demands discipline. And discipline flourishes by categorization.

One must be either man or woman, either feminine or masculine, or if necessary, neither of those, while simultaneously proving, what qualities of the sexes they either lack or combine to merit the pop cultural self-description as non-binary or genderfluid. One must either embody success and be able to express what narrative of success they fulfill, while corresponding to one culture or another, a majority, a minority; or humbly identify with their failure to become deserving of pity and be benevolently forgiven for having been an unuseful individual. The self – proclaimed highly developed, western society, prides itself with the civility of categorization. It allows the most precise of identifications, often confused with precise knowledge or even progress.

Naturally this applies to the way we consider the world to be understood and social perceptions to be learnt. Kate Crawford’s book “Atlas of AI” recognizes this problem concerning the development of Artificial Intelligence being trained with categorized knowledge. We ask a chatbot to generate a picture of a “whore”, it will reliably know how to portray one, very differently to the prompts “sexually liberated woman”, “femme fatale”, “woman” or “prostitute”, while not interconnecting these categories other than as associative vectors in a word matrix. Wouldn’t all these terms describe a woman? Or would none, and do their simplistic definitions accompany the “second birth” indicated in de Beauvoir’s quote, the birth of the “social” woman? When a woman is born, figuratively, as a re-embodiment of the template of womanhood, she becomes complicit to sexism. The disciplinary function of patriarchy thrives on the compliance of women to the female narrative, with women dictating one another. The very need to conform to a category assigns criteria to what self-fulfillment means for a woman. Many visions of what a woman’s future can be are attributed traditionally masculine abilities, such as willpower, persuasiveness, and cunningness. The social woman

must then choose between success, sexual appeal, nurturing motherhood, being a woman's liberator; while simultaneously controlling and devaluating members of their gender-divided communities in terms of femininity.

"Discipline and Punish" by French philosopher Michel Foucault explains the theory of how discipline becomes easiest when being assigned a specific role. The incapability to think outside of the persona we are demanded to operate as stems from the way commands are learned. It follows a simple principle of action and reaction, such as a pupil knowing, their teacher's commands are not statements to be morally interpreted or discussed but triggers for obeying to specific tasks. Equivalently, a woman becomes a Pavlovian Dog to the interpretation of real situations, tarnished by her learned values of the sexes. A simple mannerism like rudeness, may be interpreted as impoliteness or a sign of short temper by the self-reflecting male, while for the self-reflecting female, the aggressiveness of her behavior becomes the depreciation of her identity as a woman.

In a chapter further in the book, Foucault mentions Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" – a design for a highly functional surveillance prison. A multitude of cells are arranged to face a tower in the middle of the building. While the cells are constantly illuminated, the observation tower is held in the dark, disallowing the prisoners to estimate whether they are being watched. While this may firstly result in constant fear it can quickly develop into a norm of collectively compliant behavior. It isn't the knowledge of being watched but the potential of it, that maintains hierarchical structures in one of the most effective ways. A group of individuals made inferior, lives a seemingly independent life, not worried about a faux pas or feeling oppressed by its potential consequences. The faux pas never occurs. The examined group follows a self-government of discipline, not allowing themselves to question the fictive authority that is visually "held in the dark".

So, submitting to power is a process. "You're not born a woman; you become one." I argue that while Simone de Beauvoir's statement is touching and corresponds with the theory previously explained, it is equally euphemistic. It provokes the vision of a world, whose fatalism can be differently interpreted, even prevented, if only done at the right moment of personal development. To deny women's determination, while being bound to the biological reality of a physically weaker and a physically stronger sex, vulgarly spoken: to the assessment of the man who penetrates and the woman who is penetrated; defies the rudimentary explanations of sexism. In the biblical story of Adam and Eve, the first sin is committed by a woman and it is of sexual nature. This stems directly from the observation of the male and the female sex as they are from birth and it became an inevitable tool of male dominance. The resulting notion of the woman who is prone to sin and irrational exists independently of Christianity and continues to define patriarchal discourse.

The fallacy of the inferior woman, even if subconsciously, lives on and so a woman is born a victim. Not always born to become a victim, not always born to suffer from an exposure to violence, but always to incorporate the mannerisms, the thinking patterns, the words of self-reflection only a victim would express as a result of her learnt role. That marks the extent of a determination she can't evade. But what follows regardless, is an autonomous life. And recognizing patterns of power is what creates a space of hope in terms of how to use them for one's own advantage..

A woman is offered a chance by being born twice. Once as an infant, and once as she makes the choice whether to become a woman in the oppressive sense of the word. So knowing of

this, she must scream at the top of her lungs until the very man's hands lifting her out of the womb tremble in shame.

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