One Is Not Born, But Rather Becomes, Woman: Explanation Of The Quote

“One is not born, but rather becomes, woman.” - quoted from Simone de Beauvoir’s phenomenal book, the second sex. She was a philosopher of the existentialist tradition. In the second sex, she points out that “woman” is known as “other”. “Man” has historically defined what it means to be human, and “woman” is not “man”. As such, woman lives with the reality of gender oppression. Without the ability to freely navigate the world without oppression, woman have to assert their freedom and climb the social ladder, while men simply take the elevator to the top floor.

She believed that people are nothing without their actions, as we are defined by the choices that we make. In the case of a woman, the identity known as the “other” is impressed upon them by a male dominant world. A woman’s social and biological factors of her life is something she may not have control over which limits her freedom, but doesn’t mean she isn’t free either. A woman is considered to have escaped her freedom when, for example, she falls into the feminine stereotypes dictated upon by a male dominant society. This acceptance is a type of inauthenticity. Man creates “woman” as “other” by defining himself as not feminine, yet a saviour and a subject. Woman are viewed as “a damsel in distress”, or even an object of possession. They are seen as a biological/sexual object.

Simone’s answer to what is a woman, is that no one answer is adequate enough because the feminine being is marked by a fundamental ambiguity. If ambiguity was the condition, it means that the choices we make create our meaning and existence, therefore, one is not born, but becomes a woman. Ones radical freedom must be accepted to live with authenticity.

One example involves what Simone’s attitude would have been towards people who are now considered “transgender”, or one who decides to live as a gender different than the one assigned at birth. Simone de Beauvoir’s ethics and concept of gender roles would allow for the acceptance of transgender individuals. Therefore, her feminist followers from the second wave would’ve been pushed towards the same commitment, leading to the inclusivity of transgender individuals within feminist circles.

Because of the fact that her book was published in 1949, some of her comments and interpretations are constraint due to the changes information and mentality of her time. While not necessarily making her arguments weaker, some findings are considerably some questions regarding her work can only be answered through the evaluation of her ethical arguments.

Woman of the 21st century are overthrowing the myth of femininity. They have proven to show independence, but their success does not come easily with their given conditions. Many women face daily issues due to their sexuality, and their independence does not come with ease. As woman are raised up, their normal destiny pushes towards marriage, which subordinated them to man from a practical point of view. Therefore, the study of woman traditional destiny is essential.

Maybe the problem is in the way we communicate; that our concepts limit our true meanings. A

solution can be that the environment we live in essentially forms us. A woman becomes a woman not only because she was physically born that way, but because of the way she was treated as she grew up and developed into the woman she became. She was treated as a female solely on her physical sex which formed her gender identity.

In relation to Simone de Beauvoir's quote, I disagree that we are simply formed by our environment. Since birth, a woman is treated as a woman because of the sole purpose of physical sex, but that is completely different from emotional or social gender. For example, if a woman acted in ways that a man would, that would not change her gender because of her gender has already been set up in a way by her parents while raising her. Gender is chosen in the early stage of life, but shows the difference between being born a woman and becoming a woman. Gender identity is also stable and most of the time not recreated, but some people will eventually choose to change their physical sex sometime later in their lives. Another objection may include the fact that many people are grown up into a specific gender, but choose to change their sex. Transgender people prove why Simone de Beauvoir's theory is not credible. The final objection is that humans are simply formed by their environment to some extent. Men and woman are treated very differently and it no doubt affects everyone. The physical sex is irrelevant towards the social and emotional genders, and therefore must show an incline towards a gender.

Her quote can serve us by creating awareness in order to change how certain things in society are done for the better. However, if we are only products of the environment, then we have no choice over what we become. We do not have the freedom to change anything. For that reason, an individual essence is required to enable us to make individual choices.

To conclude, Simone de Beauvoir's quote clearly grabs attention towards how women are being treated differently within societies and how it has affected them. However, saying that one is bot born, but rather becomes a woman is pushing the limits. It raises many questions that do not correspond to any experiences I have encountered. For this quote to have an impact instead of just being a statement, free will must be acted upon it.