

Judith Butler

- Was born on February 24, 1956, in Cleveland, Ohio.
- American philosopher and gender theorist.
- Her work has influenced political philosophy, ethics, and the fields of third-wave feminist, queer, and literary theory.
- Studied philosophy at Bennington College then transferred to Yale where she received her B.A. (1978), M.A. (1982), and Ph.D. (1984).
- She taught at Wesleyan University, George Washington University, and Johns Hopkins University and University of California, Berkeley.
- Her major works include: Performative acts and gender constitution(1988), Gender Trouble (1990), Limitation and gender insubordination(1990), Bodies that matter(1993), Excitable Speech(1997), Undoing Gender (2004) and Giving an account of Oneself(2005).
- First coined the term, "gender performativity" in her book Gender Trouble.



Gender Trouble

- *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* was first published in 1990, selling over 100,000 copies internationally, in multiple languages
- Butler's goal in with *Gender Trouble* was to make a case for rejecting the female identity as the foundation for feminist practice, her goal was to produce an account of gender formation without the alternative to the female body as a natural circumstance.
- In the first chapter Butler explains how the task or goal for feminism is to theorize gender and feminist politics without referencing women or their natural female bodies. That any instance on using the body as the foundation to help liberate feminist politics is going to be doomed to reinstate some form of oppression.



Gender Trouble (continued)

- In Gender Trouble Chapter 2: “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix” Butler discusses the idea of a time before patriarchy and how thinking of a time before patriarchy is dangerous because it not only focuses away from contemporary issues of gender but it also because it reinforces culture/nature(body) binaries that have oppressed feminism.
- In Gender Trouble Chapter 3: “Subversive Bodily Acts-Conclusion: From Parody to Politics” Butler discusses French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's ideas of gender, that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. She also discusses Beauvoir's idea that masculine or phallogocentric quality of language shows that women or feminine linguistics don't actually exist. That there is a linguistic absence, and that its only purpose is to juxtapose masculine linguistics.





Gender Trouble Quotes

- Butler stated, " 'One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one'. A simple yet effective sentence that kind of summarizes chapter one in a nutshell. The idea that gender is something one does rather than a built-in trait that results from some quality derived from the body.
- Butler also stated, "learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself" This quote highlights the importance of learning to communicate to your audience, that is to understand who your audience is and to conform to their way of language in order to make sure your message is received and understood. If one decides to not conform, then your words will be lost in the process of trying to convey them.



Gender Trouble Quotes (continued)

- Butler stated, " 'If Lacan presumes that female homosexuality issues from a disappointed heterosexuality, as observation is said to show, could it not be equally clear to the observer that heterosexuality issues from a disappointed homosexuality?' " This quote is important because of how eye opening it is. I'm sure at the time people didn't even consider putting themselves in another's shoes and changing their perspective to better understand female homosexuality issues. This quote enables the reader to understand that there are more than one perspective on things and that the heterosexual view of female homosexuality issues is not the only way to perceive such issues.

Questions

- Do you think that one's gender is a performance?
- Do you think that language should be something the feminist movement should continue to focus on? If so why?
- Why is it so important to differentiate between feminist politics and the natural female body?
- Why is it difficult for most people to differentiate between gender and sex?

