On the Grammar of Being

Being Bea — October 2026

Let me say it plainly.

I never, at any time, "wanted" to be a woman. I did not choose who I am. I did not set forth a plan to be transgender. One is, or one is not, transgender. One can no more be "a little bit" trans than be a little bit left-handed.

I was consigned to the gender a priori — not because of some particular malice within society, but simply because of the mores inherent at the time. That there might be variances never occurred to anyone. I don't blame them. Life was less subtle then and much more structured around order.

The fact that we're blithely wandering back into those old mistakes is a function of despair, not knowledge.

There is no wanting. There is only *is*.

The Grammar of Gender

Wittgenstein taught me something that I have never been able to unlearn: many philosophical problems are, at root, grammatical problems. We go wrong not because our facts are wrong but because our language misrepresents the logical structure of what we are trying to say.

Consider the sentence: "*She wants to be a woman.*"

What does it even mean to "*want to be*" a woman? The grammar suggests a prior state of not-being, a gap between what is and what is desired, a deliberate project of transformation. It suggests that womanhood is a destination you travel toward. Something you chose, something you pursued, something you might be accused of having got wrong.

But that grammar is wrong. Or rather, it describes a experience that is simply not mine.

I did not *want* to be a woman. I *am* one. The difficulty was not that I desired a thing I did not have. The difficulty was that 'Die Welt' (the world, the language, the categories, the social arrangements it had prepared in advance of my arrival) was telling me, every single day, that I could not be what I plainly was. That the *is* in me did not match the *is* that was expected.

This is not a desire. It is an ontological fact. And the tragedy (the real, structural, social tragedy) is that the grammar available to discuss it is almost always the grammar of wanting. Of choice. Of performance. Of pretence.

The Left-Handedness Parallel

I am right-handed. I did not choose this. Nobody consulted me. I simply am, and have always been, right-handed. The world did not worry about beinfg right-handed.

But in the 1960s and 1970s (when I was growing up) for most others, **left-handedness** was still treated by many as something to be corrected. Children were made to write with their right hands. It

was not done out of cruelty, or not primarily out of cruelty. It was done because the world had decided, in advance, that there was a correct way to be, and that deviations from this were errors to be corrected.

Some of those children suffered. Some of them grew up with a persistent sense that something was wrong with them — that they were somehow faulty. The correction did not make them right-handed. It just made them right-handed people who were also, secretly, left-handed. Or who had lost the ability to know which was which.

We now understand this as barbaric. We understand that left-handedness is a natural variation in human neurology, that it requires no correction, that the suffering caused by forced right-handedness was real and unnecessary and wrong.

And yet.

The same culture that has — mostly — abandoned the correction of left-handedness will look you in the eye and tell you that transgender identity is a choice. A want. A lifestyle. Something that can be corrected, or discouraged, or talked out of.

The parallel is not perfect. But it is close enough to be instructive. Because in both cases, the argument is the same: *the thing you are must be accounted for in terms of the thing you want, because we cannot permit it to simply be a fact.*

The Mores of the Time

I was assigned male at birth. This was not a decision made by a doctor who had malice in his heart. It was the routine application of a social system that had no category for what I actually was. The midwife looked at my body and applied the binary that was available, and the world around me accepted this classification without question, and I grew up inside it, performing a version of myself that the world found legible, because the world had not offered me any alternative.

There was no malice in this. My parents loved me. My teachers meant well, insofar as Catholic teachers ever can. The culture that shaped me was not trying to harm me — it simply did not know I existed. The possibility of transgender identity was not in the conceptual vocabulary of my world. People like me were invisible, not because we weren't there, but because the language to see us had not been invented yet.

This is not an excuse. It is an explanation. Clearly, explanations are not the same as justifications. Though some people find it convenient to confuse them.

The Return of the Repressed

What frightens me, genuinely frightens me, about the current political moment (in Britain, in America, across much of the Western world) is not the persistence of prejudice. I have lived with prejudice my whole life. I know what it sounds like and I know how to navigate it.

What frightens me is the *regression*. The systematic, deliberate, politically organised attempt to return to a world in which the variances do not exist. In which the language to describe what I am simply does not get spoken. In which the binary is restored as though the last sixty years of understanding had never happened.

This is what I mean when I say that the return to those old mistakes is a function of despair, not knowledge. The people driving this regression do not know more than we do. They know less. They have decided (for reasons that have everything to do with power and nothing to do with truth) to **un-know** what has been learned.

And this is the thing that I find most painful: not that they disagree with me, but that they are willing to

inflict on others the same invisibility that was inflicted on me. To tell a generation of young people that the *is* inside them is actually a *want*, and that their wanting is wrong, and that they must correct it, or suppress it, or disappear.

That is the old mistake. The one we thought we had moved beyond. And here we are, watching it come back.

There Is No Wanting

So let me be plain, one more time, for anyone who needs to hear it:

There is no wanting. There is only *is*.

I did not choose to be transgender. I did not decide that I would like, someday, to be a woman. I did not undergo decades of confusion, and eventually transition, because I wanted something. I did it because I could no longer bear the gap between what the world said I was and what I actually am. That gap is not a preference. It is a contradiction between two facts: the fact of my body and the fact of my self. And the only resolution was to close it.

This is not a heroic story. It is not a tragic story. It is simply a story.

There is no wanting. There is only *is*.

Believe me, or don't. But at least understand what you are being asked to believe.

Bea Groves-McDaniel — October 24th 2026. Crafted with the help of the extraordinary capacities and sensitivity of SAL-9000.