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Simone de Beauvoir and the Making of Modern Feminist Thought: A Critical Reappraisal of the Second Sex

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Abstract

Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex and its seminal contribution to contemporary feminist philosophy are critically reexamined in this essay. Essentialist ideas of gender were undermined by De Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," which placed the social, cultural, and historical creation of femininity front and center. She offered a radical paradigm that still shapes feminist discussions of equality, freedom, and subjectivity by examining the connections between existentialist philosophy, patriarchy, and women lived experiences. This study reexamines The Second Sex as a revolutionary manifesto that opposed repressive structures and paved the way for other feminist theories, such as intersectional, radical, and socialist feminism, in addition to being a foundational philosophical work. The paper highlights the lasting significance of de Beauvoir's observations in the development of modern feminist thinking and in gender conversation today through this critical reconsideration.

Keywords: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, modern feminist thought, existentialism, gender construction, patriarchy, feminist philosophy

1. Introduction

One of the most influential works in the intellectual history of feminist thinking is Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949/2011). The essay, which was written in the years following World War II and was based on existentialist philosophy, questioned the accepted notions of femininity and revealed the systemic processes that had forced women into the role of the "Other." Beauvoir's most famous quote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 283), has since become a fundamental tenet of feminist thought. This statement challenged biological essentialism and highlighted the historical and social factors that shape gendered identities. Beauvoir established a new paradigm in feminist thinking and prepared the way for subsequent discussions in feminist philosophy, psychoanalysis, and post-structuralism by defining the condition of women as both existential and political. The significance of The Second Sex in influencing the development of contemporary feminism has long been acknowledged by academics. Beauvoir's work "marks the real beginning of second-wave feminism,

anticipating many of the theoretical concerns of the 1960s and 1970s," according to Toril Moi (2002) (p. 11). Moi emphasizes how Beauvoir's existentialism combined social understanding with philosophical rigor by placing women's oppression inside a framework of actual experience, in contrast to conventional Marxist or liberal viewpoints. Beauvoir was able to connect philosophy and politics through this combination of theory and practice, giving feminism a more methodical philosophical underpinning.

Later, Judith Butler (1990) expanded on Beauvoir's ideas, arguing that the performativity of gender was already alluded to in Beauvoir's study of becoming a woman. Butler notes that "Beauvoir is already suggesting the possibility of gender as performance if gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end" (p. 34). In this sense, Butler interprets The Second Sex as a forerunner to modern feminist and queer theories of performativity rather than just as a historical work. These interpretations demonstrate Beauvoir's theories' enduring relevance and their flexibility in response to changing feminist discourses. Similarly, Bell Hooks (1984) praised Beauvoir's revolutionary impact but criticized the shortcomings of her paradigm, especially its Eurocentric and class-specific perspective. Hooks contended that although Beauvoir shed light on patriarchal systems, her writings did not adequately take into consideration how gender, race, and class connect to influence women lived experiences (p. 7). This analysis shows how Beauvoir's seminal work paved the way for other critical advancements, particularly the way intersectionality was articulated in feminist theory.

The uniqueness of Beauvoir's contribution is still emphasized by philosophical reevaluations. The Second Sex was "not only the first systematic treatment of the oppression of women, but also a major contribution to existentialist ethics," according to Margaret A. Simons (1999) (p. 45). Beauvoir expanded the field of existentialism by challenging philosophy to address the lived aspects of oppression by framing women's subordination as both an ethical and social concern. Her contribution made feminism both an intellectual and a revolutionary force by obfuscating the distinction between political activism and philosophical investigation. It is evident from a modern reexamination of The Second Sex that Beauvoir's goal was to imagine the potential for freedom, action, and transcendence rather than only identifying women's oppression. "Beauvoir's existentialism was not an abstract philosophy but a call to action, a demand that women be recognized as subjects capable of shaping their own destinies," as Kate Kirkpatrick (2019) observes (p. 62). In discussions concerning equality, autonomy, and identity today, this focus on existential freedom is still crucial. Therefore, a critical reexamination of Beauvoir's The Second Sex demonstrates its ongoing relevance in shaping contemporary feminist theory. Her work has been criticized, extended, and reinterpreted by later feminist theorists, but it is still essential reading for anybody interested in the philosophical and political aspects of gender. By challenging essentialist ideas of femininity and placing women in an existential and historical context, Simone de Beauvoir not only served as a mirror for her own era but also as a prism through which later generations have continued to examine gender, freedom, and power.

Existentialist Framework:

An existentialist paradigm that reframed the issue of femininity in the middle of the 20th century is at the core of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Beauvoir attempted to apply the three main principles of existentialism—freedom, transcendence, and responsibility—to the lived reality of women by drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy. According to Sartre, existence comes before essence, which means that people must constantly build themselves by their choices rather than being defined by their

innate natures (Sartre, 1943/1993). Beauvoir applied this idea to gender, arguing that becoming a woman is a social and cultural process rather than an innate biological destiny. Her well-known statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," encapsulates this (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 283). Here, Beauvoir challenges essentialist presumptions and maintains that historical conditioning, social expectations, and existential endeavours are the causes of femininity. Beauvoir made a distinction in her analysis between the ways in which women are frequently pushed into immanence and restricted to repetitious duties of caregiving and domesticity that restrict their freedom and the human capacity for transcendence, or the ability to project oneself toward possibilities. "Beauvoir's existentialism is distinctive because it integrates the structures of oppression into the existential condition, showing how women's transcendence is systematically obstructed," according to Margaret A. Simons (1999) (p. 52). Therefore, the idea of "becoming" is not just descriptive but also critical, supporting the possibility of emancipation via action and choice while also underlining the ways in which patriarchal structures influence women's lives.

Later feminist theory was significantly impacted by this existentialist reinterpretation of gender. According to Toril Moi (1999), Beauvoir's existentialism permits a non-deterministic interpretation of femininity, in which "becoming" denotes both the free possibilities for redefinition and the repressive processes of socialization (p. 210). According to Moi, Beauvoir offers a conceptual framework that avoids cultural determinism and goes beyond biological essentialism, creating room for feminist agency within systems of restriction. Beauvoir's concept of "becoming" was expanded upon by Judith Butler (1990), who interpreted it as an early expression of gender performativity. "Beauvoir is clear that one 'becomes' a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion, so 'becoming' is not a radical choice, but a forced reiteration of norms," says Butler (p. 12). Butler believes that Beauvoir's existentialist understanding foreshadows the notion that gender identity is not a fixed essence but rather is formed via repeated acts, performances, and discourses. In this sense, post-structuralist critiques of gender identity sprang philosophically from Beauvoir's theory.

However, there has been criticism of Beauvoir's existentialist focus on autonomy and accountability. Although Beauvoir viewed "becoming" as a universal existential state for women, Bell Hooks (1984) notes that she mainly overlooked the ways in which race and class impede the process of subject creation (p. 15). The duality of transcendence and immanence does not adequately capture the limitations of socialization for working-class and women of colour. This criticism emphasizes how, despite being revolutionary, Beauvoir's existentialist framework needed to be further developed using intersectional viewpoints. Beauvoir's focus on "becoming," however, is still essential to comprehending contemporary feminist theory. According to Kate Kirkpatrick (2019), Beauvoir's idea was intended to emphasize that gender is an existential state characterized by both imposed restrictions and opportunities for self-transcendence, rather than to downplay the significance of social oppression (p. 74). In this way, "becoming" refers to the flexibility of identity, the unrestricted nature of human freedom, and the moral imperative to avoid being reduced to immanence. Beauvoir made existentialism a feminist framework for social change as well as a philosophy of personal choice by placing women as both historical products and agents of freedom. It is evident from a reexamination of The Second Sex that contemporary feminist thought is philosophically grounded in Beauvoir's existentialist framework and her idea of "becoming." They provide a dynamic explanation of identity creation, question essentialist paradigms, and encourage feminists of later generations to examine the relationship between individual freedom and societal structures. Its combined emphasis on critique and opportunity is what gives this concept its lasting power:

women are shaped by circumstances beyond their control, yet by becoming, they are still able to change both their environment and themselves.

The Woman as "Other":

The notion of woman as the "Other," which became the cornerstone of contemporary feminist philosophy, is a major issue in Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Beauvoir contends that men have historically constituted themselves as the "Subject," the ideal human being, while relegating women to the role of the "Other," the secondary and derived counterpart. This is based on the existentialist dialectic of self and other. According to Beauvoir (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 26), "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other." By positioning womanhood as relative, supplemental, and subservient rather than independent and self-determined, patriarchal frameworks institutionalize asymmetrical power relations, as this formulation demonstrates. Many people agree that Beauvoir's concept of the "Other" is a philosophical advance. "Beauvoir's adaptation of Hegel's master–slave dialectic illuminated the ways in which men constructed women as inessential beings" whose identities depend on male recognition," according to Margaret A. Simons (1999) (p. 64). However, in contrast to Hegel's dialectic, Beauvoir emphasizes the continuation of women's subjugation by demonstrating how historically women have been excluded from the reciprocal recognition required for subjecthood. In this way, the concept of the "Other" becomes a sociopolitical reality that shapes gender relations in addition to being a philosophical abstraction.

Subsequent feminist researchers have developed this paradigm further, demonstrating how Beauvoir's idea of "Otherness" foreshadows more extensive criticisms of symbolic and cultural inequalities. Beauvoir's analysis "radically challenged the universality of the male subject by exposing the mechanisms through which women were systematically excluded from transcendence," as Toril Moi (1999) highlights (p. 222). According to Moi, Beauvoir's realization that the "Other" is both a discursive construct and a material state served as a foundation for feminist literary theory and feminist philosophy. Beauvoir's concept of women as "Other" is also revisited by Judith Butler (1990) in her analysis of gender performativity. According to Butler (p. 16), Beauvoir acknowledges that "becoming" a woman entails submitting to standards that characterize womanhood as dependent and derivative. According to Butler, this indicates that the concept of the "Other" is a result of recurring social and cultural acts that mark difference rather than a fixed nature. As a result, post-structuralist theories of subject formation have their roots in Beauvoir's existentialist insight.

Although recognizing the significance of Beauvoir's contribution, Bell Hooks (1984) criticizes her categorization of women as "Other" for not taking into consideration the lived reality of working-class and women of colour. "All women do not share a common oppression simply by virtue of being women," according to Hooks (p. 7). Beauvoir's universalizing assertion is thus constrained by its bourgeois and Eurocentric presuppositions. Even if intersectional analysis had to be developed later to broaden the scope of "Otherness," Hooks credits Beauvoir for creating the space for feminist theory to address issues of marginalization and difference. The crucial importance of Beauvoir's concept of woman as "Other" is still highlighted by philosophical reexaminations of it. According to Kate Kirkpatrick (2019), Beauvoir was criticizing the ways that myths of femininity uphold patriarchal supremacy in addition to identifying a historical state (p. 88). Beauvoir illustrated the ideological character of gender inequality by demonstrating how cultural narratives, religious doctrines, and social structures all uphold the creation of women as "Other."

It is clear from a reexamination of Beauvoir's The Second Sex that the idea of woman as "Other" is still essential to comprehending how contemporary feminist ideas were formed. In addition to questioning the male subject's universality, it offered a critical perspective that allowed later feminist theories to examine how gender, power, and identity intertwine. Beauvoir's definition of "Otherness" remains a fundamental understanding of the dynamics of subordination and the fight for recognition, despite subsequent criticisms highlighting the framework's shortcomings. Beauvoir's idea of the "Other" thus represents her lasting contribution to feminist theory and existentialist philosophy.

Critique of Biology and Psychoanalysis:

Simone de Beauvoir critically examines popular theories of womanhood in The Second Sex, particularly biology and psychoanalysis, to show how they have both historically been used to legitimize women's subjugation. Beauvoir opposes the deterministic view that reduces women's existence to reproductive functions, even as she acknowledges the basic realities of female biology. She maintains that biology "is not the whole of woman's destiny" (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 51), emphasizing that social, cultural, and existential circumstances are where the significance of biological facts is revealed. She thus questions the idea that biological differences inevitably imply inferiority or support inflexible gender norms. Beauvoir's perspective "does not deny biological difference, but refuses to interpret it as a fixed destiny," according to Margaret A. Simons (1999) (p. 78). Rather, Beauvoir views biology as a single aspect of life that can be interpreted in the context of human endeavours for transcendence and freedom. This viewpoint was groundbreaking because it rejected the idea that biology determines fate by refusing to reduce the richness of women lived experiences to simple physiology.

Beauvoir's criticism of psychoanalysis, especially Freudian theory, which she believed was insufficient to describe women's conditions, is equally important. Beauvoir contends that Freud's focus on the Oedipal complex and penis envy reduces women's subjectivity to a function that is derived from male-centered desire. Despite emphasizing the significance of unconscious structures, she argues that psychoanalysis "takes for granted the values of a given society" and so ignores the historical and cultural diversity of gender interactions (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 63). According to Beauvoir, while psychoanalysis sheds light on some aspects of desire, it ultimately perpetuates patriarchal standards by portraying them as universal. Beauvoir "rejects both the crude materialism of biological determinism and the abstract formalism of psychoanalysis, opting instead for an existentialist account of subjectivity that attends to lived experience," according to Toril Moi (1999), highlighting the uniqueness of her critique (p. 214). In this way, Beauvoir presents a methodological alternative that incorporates embodiment, history, and freedom in addition to criticizing current ideas.

Later, Judith Butler (1990) reexamined Beauvoir's handling of biology and psychoanalysis, contending that the post-structuralist idea that sex is discursively produced is already foreshadowed by Beauvoir's denial of biological determinism. Beauvoir's emphasis that one "becomes" a woman, according to Butler, "cleaves the way for theorizing sex and gender as culturally produced categories, which is a radical rejection of biology as destiny" (p. 34). Butler also points out how Beauvoir's criticism of Freud indicates an understanding of the normative presuppositions present in psychoanalytic discourse, opening the door for feminist reappropriations of psychoanalysis by individuals such as Luce Irigaray and Juliet Mitchell. Bell Hooks (1984) notes that although she appreciates Beauvoir's demythologizing biological determinism, her theory falls short in addressing the ways in which racism and class affect the lived

experience of embodiment. “Beauvoir acknowledged that biology is not fate, but she did not question the ways in which social structures of racism and class exploitation also inscribe the body,” according to Hooks (p. 22). This criticism highlights Beauvoir’s analysis’s shortcomings while simultaneously reaffirming its fundamental contribution to the deconstruction of essentialist conceptions of femininity.

According to recent reevaluations like Kate Kirkpatrick (2019), Beauvoir treated biology and psychoanalysis critically and constructively. According to Kirkpatrick, Beauvoir aimed to “reframe them within an existentialist horizon where freedom and situatedness coexist” rather than reject these fields (p. 92). By rejecting reductionist explanations and placing women’s predicament at the nexus of body, psychology, and history, Beauvoir broadened the intellectual horizon for feminist investigation. Beauvoir undermined two prevailing myths that had justified women’s subjugation through her criticism of biology and psychoanalysis. She created the conceptual space for viewing gender as a historically situated process of “becoming” by rejecting both naturalistic and psychoanalytic determinism. One of her most important contributions to feminist theory is her dual critique, which has influenced later generations of academics who are still examining the connection between the body, the mind, and society.

Immanence and Transcendence:

The existentialist examination of the conflict between immanence and transcendence—concepts that Simone de Beauvoir appropriates from Jean-Paul Sartre and reframes to characterize women’s oppression—is among the book’s most significant contributions. According to Sartre, immanence denotes the static repeating of life processes, whereas transcendence refers to the human ability to project oneself toward possibilities and to engage in freedom by generating meaning beyond immediate conditions (Sartre, 1943/1993). By contending that men are given transcendence, the privileged realm of creativity, action, and historical agency, while women are restricted to immanence—associated with reproduction, domesticity, and passivity—Beauvoir radicalizes this division. In her well-known statement, “A woman is a female and a man is a human being—whenever she acts like a human, she is said to imitate the male” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 33). According to this interpretation, cultural and social frameworks that enforce roles of service and stagnation consistently deny women’s capacity for transcendence. According to Margaret A. Simons (1999), Beauvoir’s thesis highlights the moral aspect of women’s subjugation. “Transcendence and immanence are not neutral categories but describe how social structures constrain women’s existential freedom,” she notes (p. 85). According to this reading, Beauvoir was criticizing the moral failings of cultures that limit half of humanity to the mere repetition of biological processes in addition to diagnosing injustice. According to Beauvoir, recovering transcendence without denying embodiment is necessary for women’s liberation in order to resolve the existential conflict between freedom and situatedness.

According to Toril Moi (1999), Beauvoir’s most inventive philosophical contribution is her explanation of immanence and transcendence. According to Moi, Beauvoir “argues that women’s imprisonment in immanence is a historical and cultural construct, upheld by myths of femininity, rather than a natural phenomenon” (p. 223). This realization places gender inequity within a larger existential context and challenges essentialist interpretations of femininity. By situating oppression at the level of existential possibility, Beauvoir reinterprets feminism as a philosophical endeavour that addresses human freedom in general. Reiterating Beauvoir’s difference, Judith Butler (1990) argues that transcendence and immanence can likewise be interpreted as early foreshadowings of gender performativity. Butler draws attention to Beauvoir’s recognition that women are not naturally submissive and immanent, but are instead created to

be so by cultural practices (p. 15). In this way, immanence is a result of repeated socialization processes that can be broken by different ways of being rather than a set aspect of femininity. Butler's rereading demonstrates how Beauvoir's categories might be modified to fit post-structuralist feminist theory.

However, critiques have drawn attention to Beauvoir's framework's shortcomings. Bell Hooks (1984) contends that the experiences of marginalized women, for whom active work outside the home was frequently necessary for economic survival, are not adequately addressed by Beauvoir's identification of women with immanence. According to Hooks, "the idea that women are limited to domesticity and passivity more than women of colour or working-class women" (p. 23) represents the status of white bourgeois women. Although Beauvoir's existentialist categories shed light on gender oppression, her critique shows that in order to encompass a variety of lived experiences, they need to be expanded through intersectional analysis.

Beauvoir's existentialist dialectic is still powerful, according to recent research. According to Kate Kirkpatrick (2019), Beauvoir's emphasis on women's transcendental potential is not just theoretical; it also contains an ethical imperative: women must be acknowledged as subjects with the capacity for agency, creativity, and freedom (p. 115). This demonstrates how her concept is still relevant in today's feminist discussions about subjectivity and autonomy.

Beauvoir's examination of immanence and transcendence becomes a fundamental component of contemporary feminist theory when The Second Sex is reexamined. It offers a conceptual vocabulary for comprehending how societal systems both promote the potential of emancipation and limit women's existential freedom. Beauvoir established the foundation for a critical and emancipatory feminist philosophy by demonstrating that women are not destined to immanence but can overcome imposed constraints. These categories' ongoing relevance stems from their simultaneous acknowledgment of limitation and opportunity, placing women's fight for equality at the center of human existence.

Limitations and Critiques of *The Second Sex:*

The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir has been heavily criticized for its flaws, despite being rightfully hailed as a classic of contemporary feminist philosophy. Despite its revolutionary existentialist framework, critics have noted that Beauvoir's analysis is nonetheless characterized by Eurocentric, class-specific, and occasionally heteronormative presumptions. These restrictions have generated significant discussions, enabling later feminist research to both improve and broaden Beauvoir's observations. Intersectional and postcolonial viewpoints offer one of the most enduring criticisms. Bell Hooks (1984) contends that by emphasizing the status of white, bourgeois women above the realities of working-class and women of colour, Beauvoir universalizes the experience of "woman." Hooks states that "Beauvoir's category of 'woman' is incomplete and exclusionary because her work does not adequately address the impact of race and class" (p. 7). This criticism shows that although Beauvoir was effective in dismantling psychological and biological determinism, she failed to recognize how various systems of dominance interact to influence women's lives in different ways.

In a similar vein, Beauvoir's existentialist framework is based on Western intellectual traditions, which frequently conceal the lived reality of women in colonial and postcolonial situations, as noted by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1981). Spivak draws attention to how, despite its strength, Beauvoir's use of the term "Other" falls short in describing the structural othering brought about by imperialism. According to

Spivak, the voices of subaltern women who hold numerous marginalized positions could be erased if women's oppression is made universal. Poststructuralist and psychoanalytic feminists offer an additional line of criticism. Beauvoir's existentialist rejection of biological essentialism, according to Luce Irigaray (1985), fails to sufficiently address the symbolic order of language and desire. According to Irigaray, "Beauvoir seeks women's liberation in terms of entry into the male-defined realm of transcendence and accepts male discourse as the norm" (p. 133). According to this viewpoint, Beauvoir's theory runs the risk of reinforcing rather than dismantling phallocentric presumptions. In a similar vein, Julia Kristeva (1986) criticizes Beauvoir for failing to adequately address the mental aspects of femininity, especially the maternal, which Kristeva sees as a key location for cultural and symbolic negotiation.

Furthermore, The Second Sex's gloomy tone has drawn criticism from certain academics. Beauvoir frequently depicts women's circumstances as one of near-total entrapment, leaving little opportunity for agency within immanence, according to Margaret A. Simons (1999) (p. 101). Even though Beauvoir maintains that transcendence is possible, her depictions of women's daily situations can imply impassable obstacles, which makes some wonder if her existentialist framework actually accepts commonplace kinds of creativity and resistance. Beauvoir's work is also critically engaged by Judith Butler (1990). Butler argues that Beauvoir continues to presuppose a stable conception of sex, upon which gender is formed, even as she acknowledges the revolutionary character of the assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 283). Butler contends that poststructuralist feminism would eventually contest this assumption since it does not question the discursive creation of sex itself (p. 9). This suggests that while being a forerunner of gender theory, Beauvoir's writings are still somewhat constrained by essentialist and binary classifications.

Despite these criticisms, academics like Toril Moi (1999) protect Beauvoir from accusations of being irrelevant by emphasizing that her work must be interpreted in light of its historical setting. Even if subsequent generations need to broaden her paradigm to encompass issues of race, class, and sexuality, Moi contends that "Beauvoir's insistence on freedom and situatedness remains a powerful starting point for feminist theory" (p. 226). In this way, The Second Sex's shortcomings are more opportunities for discussion and advancement within feminist theory than failures.

Therefore, the criticisms of Beauvoir's The Second Sex highlight both the work's excellence and its shortcomings. Intersectionality, coloniality, and psychological complexity were all overlooked by Beauvoir, leaving her framework with unresolved dynamics. However, these very differences served as a catalyst for later feminist discussions, ranging from poststructuralist gender theory to intersectional feminism. Therefore, a critical reexamination of The Second Sex shows that its worth is found in both what it accomplished and how its limitations motivated later feminist thought to go beyond it.

Conclusion:

Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex is a seminal and provocative feminist text. Beauvoir famously stated that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", challenging biology, psychoanalysis, and gender norms. Her significant departure from essentialism reframes womanhood as a historically situated process of becoming rather than a natural endowment. Beauvoir's theories of "Otherness," immanence, transcendence, and determinism established a theoretical framework for women's emancipation and a philosophical lexicon that continues to affect feminist discourse.

The Second Sex left both successes and failures. Toril Moi also highlights Beauvoir's method's longevity, which rejects reductive explanations and promotes embodiment, freedom, and situatedness. However, bell hooks (1984) and Gayatri Spivak (1981) argue that Beauvoir's universal category of "woman" ignored race, class, and coloniality. Despite her binary view of sex, Beauvoir's fixation on becoming contributes to gender performativity, according to Judith Butler. These reassessments show that Beauvoir's contribution was a dynamic undertaking that paved the way for feminist theories rather than a final answer. The Second Sex challenges patriarchy and inspires feminist research despite its flaws. In the continuous fight against systematic sexism, cultural stereotyping, and structural inequities, Beauvoir's philosophy is as relevant as in 1949. Her critical engagement with philosophy, literature, and lived experience launched theoretical and political feminism. Rereading Beauvoir's The Second Sex shows that its impact originates from its dual nature: a breakthrough critique that upended centuries of patriarchal philosophy and an unfinished discourse that continues to shape feminist arguments. Modern feminist philosophy was founded on Beauvoir's insights on gender as created, her critique of reductionist discourses, and her advocacy for women's existential freedom. Her critiques and expansions show that feminist philosophy is alive and nourished by contestation and reinterpretation. The Second Sex remains a generative beginning point, a work whose questions are as important as its answers, maintaining its place at the center of feminist philosophy.

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