

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

*The Second Sex* was written by Simone De Beauvoir in 1949. Its major theme focuses on feminist ideology. Women liberation has been a perennial issue, not only in the western world but also in Africa. Feminism stands to challenge a mannerism in this existential universe that put men in charge of the public sphere and relegated women to the background. In her work, “*The Second Sex*”, Simone de Beauvoir saw the concept of history, biology and society as the hindrances to women liberation. She thought that since the value of women are learned through history, biology, society and culture; women can create more equal societies by re-learning the societal values. The oppression of women by men on the basis of gender is truly illegitimate and unjustified. Historically, gender inequality can be traced back to Aristotle’s declaration that “the female is female by virtue of a particular inability,”<sup>1</sup> and Thomas Aquinas’ belief that “a woman is an imperfect man and an incidental being.”<sup>2</sup> It is on this note that *The Second Sex* recognizes the problems of women, encapsulated in their oppression and unjustified attitude of history, men, culture, and society towards them. This made de Beauvoir to approach the problem of women from the continental traditions of existentialism and phenomenology. Her discussion was based on the mythical, cultural, historical, psychoanalytical mechanisms of the oppression that left women to be recognized

as “other,” “inessential” and “passive,” while recognizing men as “the subject” and “essential.”<sup>3</sup>

De Beauvoir raised the question of what it meant to be a woman. For her, womanhood is imposed by “civilization and the fundamental social meaning of woman is “Other”, which is mysterious. Thus, woman is dominated by culture, history and men, who have both political and social power.”<sup>4</sup> She denied the existence of universal human essence like Jean Paul Sartre, and upheld that femininity is socially and historically determined. Thus, this work is geared towards analyzing, evaluating and clarifying her work “*The Second Sex*” in order to understand more clearly Beauvoir’s position on womanhood. The work uses the hermeneutic method to approach and examine *The Second Sex*; it raises such questions like, 'what is woman?', 'What actually makes up a woman?', 'Under what condition can a human being be identified as a woman?', 'Is womanhood worthwhile in its nature?', 'Do women have rights as human beings as men do?', 'If yes, under what conditions can these rights be actualized by women? All these questions and the consequences of the problem emanating from such a virilocal society, which has relegated women to be in the position of the “Other” is what this work moves to clarify.

The work also examines the fruitfulness of *The Second Sex* towards the liberation of women in our contemporary African society. The finding of this research work is that De Beauvoir and her work have gone a long way in overhauling some of the traditional values of the human society that work against women. Though some scholars like, Christian Hoff Somers, Elizabeth Fox, Jean Bethke Elishtain, Camillie Paglia have criticized Beauvoir by maintaining that “feminism promotes misandry and the elevation of women’s interest above men’s interest”<sup>5</sup>, some other scholars supported de Beauvoir by remarking that the work “*the Second Sex*” has re-awakened woman from her mental, social, intellectual and emotional slumber. It has led women into recognizing their identity as human being among human species. The work further analyzes the *Second Sex* and finds out that some of the ideas and values in the *Second Sex* can be cultivated in the African woman, especially as she struggles for liberation. It can also inculcate into women certain positive values that will help them actualize their existence in the world.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

The question of the exploitation of women is one of the philosophical questions since the ages. The term, woman, has attracted diverse conceptions from different scholars. Some of the conceptions of women are vitriolic. She is perceived in low

social and economic status, and needs nurturing. This perception needs rectification, and we intend to approach it in the light of the de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir observed that history, biology, religion, culture and patriarchy are forms of domination and basis for women's problem. This is why woman is regarded as "Other", hence alienated from herself. But to de Beauvoir, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman"<sup>6</sup>; which means that a woman is nothing but what she makes of herself. It is not history, biology, culture, religion, or society that defines woman but what she makes herself to be. In other words, it is pertinent that we also attend to the problem of how the woman has failed herself too; to project her image against the seeming social conceptions that militate against her person.

In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir intends to re-awaken the woman from her social and political disadvantages in the society. This prompts the need to determine the forms of disadvantages that women suffer today. Many scholars regard *The Second Sex* as the foundation of the feminist movement; this is as it led to the growth of general movement for women empowerment and re-affirmation of their identity as human beings. To this, Alice walker rightly says, "as purple is to lavender so is woman to feminism."<sup>7</sup> In Africa, the women liberation movements seem to be hampered by some factors which make difficult or even, impossible, the

recognition of women as humans as such; then, what is the social condition of woman in Africa? How much recognition do the issues about women receive in state policies in Africa? Lastly, to Beauvoir, marriage, motherhood and child birth are some of the odds that limit the success of women, and are some of the reasons men had made women the “Other” in the society; how factual is this claim? It is important to determine the morality of this position, especially in the African setting. The work, *The Second Sex*, is a defense of women against the entrenched patriarchal system which tends to dominate women in the social and political realms of existence; it gives detailed analysis of the oppression and injustices to womanhood. Its essence is to end all oppression and subjugation against womanhood in our world. African social setting is called to special attention with its peculiar historical values. This is a start point to tackling this issue of the oppression and injustices to womanhood which could be equated with the problem of global West and global North.

### **1.3 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research work is to evaluate Simone De Beauvoir’s work “*The Second Sex*” with a view to understanding its influences on women liberation in Africa. The research considers the positive contributions De Beauvoir has made to

the issues on emancipation, on one hand. Society, history and biology, for her are the basic hindrances to advancing the position of women in the world. Women equally constitute part of this hindrance. In this regard, the study accepts, with De Beauvoir, that ‘one is not born but becomes a woman’. On the other hand, it aims at uncovering the mystery surrounding the issue of women exploitation, mostly, in indigenous settings such as Africa. Hence, improving on the security of the rights of women on the continent. There is a peculiarity about the African setting because of its deeply entrenched patriarchal socio-religious structures and values. This needs to be urgently attended to. The study intends to improve the flaws that exist in the stand of existentialism and philosophical anthropology, especially on Feminism, made obvious in De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*. The views and contributions of scholars are called into critical review as a way to effectively analyze and understand her concepts and beliefs. The emphasis on women liberation and movement in Africa is to re establishing and defending equal opportunities for men and women in different facets of the social life like, education, employment and politics.

#### **1.4 Scope of Study**

The research work is limited to Simone De Beauvoir's work, *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir's work brings to understanding the nature of gender inequalities against women, and examines women's roles and experiences in the society. In this respect, her work has been at the foundation of the rise of women movement across the globe. The study equally evaluates the idea of De Beauvoir in the light of its influences in Africa, especially as it influences women liberation. Women liberation and rights in African context have come under serious scrutiny, especially with the seeming understanding that African condition differs significantly from that obtainable in other parts of the globe. In this regard, the study undertakes an investigation to determine whether De Beauvoir's understanding that motherhood and child-care is hindrances to women emancipation and growth is by any means sustainable, especially in African society with its unwavering social position on abortion and sanctity of human life.

#### **1.5 Significance of Study**

The study is most significant to the extent that it opens the mind of women; their imagination towards their gender position and social standings with regard to their male counterpart in the society. It is intended to make them think; to arouse their

Curiosity and become dissatisfied about the seeming relegation of their status quo that is rampant in the contemporary era. Sequel to this, the study is presented as a moral force and propulsion into action to affect a social change. In other words, it is set out as a way to end negative thinking, defeatism and despondency in women. They should, rather, be creative in tackling the odds and influences militating against their attempts to achieve total gender emancipation. In this regard, the study is relevant to social ethics. Again, because the study is intended not only to posit a path to social change, but also to move the society into action. It is a prescriptive moral philosophy.

In this regard too, the study is significant as a moral appeal to the society to aid the struggle for women liberation, most especially in Africa where some of its culture, principles and values have tended to permanently subsume woman under man's property. For instance, the wives in this environment have become more or less the property of their husbands. As such, customarily, there seems to be no place for woman except with man; many other stereotypes against the womanhood follow from this cultural position. This makes it urgent for a repeated call on behalf of the woman to the society, and in condemnation of the seeming unending trend to subjugate all effort of women to assert themselves as equals to the men in this environment. The morality of this lies in the re-affirmation of the equality of both genders that constitute the human species.



Furthermore, the study lays emphasis on the existentialist's ideal by suggesting that the individual should take responsibility for any of his or her actions. This is because the study discovers that part of the obstacle to women emancipation and growth is the woman herself. Woman should stand to free herself from shackles of inferiority complex, shadows of patriarchy and masculinity. This brings out the necessity of the call on woman to assert her existence. Consequently, the study is significant to the extent that it awakens the woman from her mental slumber in the career pursuit and to economic independence. Implicitly, the society is re-awakened to the fact that the economic independence of every individual plays important role in increasing its economy strength and human development capacity. The greater demand of human resources in industries and different public sphere justifies the need for more effective life changing program for women especially in Africa where many obstacles serve as impediments to women liberation. Thus, countries that apply good aspects derived from the result of this study will be able to empower their women better. Government Law makers will be guided on issues that influence women when it comes from gender affairs commission. Lastly, the study will help African women to uncover critical areas in their struggle for liberation in the continent. On this basis, it will form an addition to other literatures that pursue the rights of women in order to restore the rightful place of womanhood as integral part of the human species on the globe.

## 1.6 Methodology

The method of hermeneutics will be adopted in this dissertation to examine, investigate and clarify De Beauvoir's work "*The Second Sex*". The essence is to interpret, examine and evaluate the position of Beauvoir's work in this research work.

The term hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word "hermeneutikos", meaning "the study of theory and exercise of interpreting concept or ideas"<sup>8</sup>. "Hermes" the source of this word is "the mythological Greek deity whose role is that of the messenger of the gods. He meditates between gods and humanity."<sup>9</sup> Hermeneutics is one of the methods in Philosophy. It is an art of science of text interpretation. It is used for the interpretation of theory because it includes the entire frame work of interpretative processes, encompassing, written, verbal and non-verbal communication. It is pertinent to be used to analyse "*The Second Sex*" for easy understanding of the work. Since Hermeneutics is the study and interpretation of human behavior and social institutions in existentialist thought, it is a discussion of the purpose of life.

Further, hermeneutics as a method of philosophy is a theory of achieving and understanding texts, utterances and so on. It looks back at a long tradition, as the set of problems it addresses since it has been prevalent in human life and have recreate and consistently called for consideration. Thus, its tools is designed to

help solve them. As a method of interpretation, it is also concerned with problem that arises when dealing with meaningful human action. As a methodological discipline, it offers tool boxes for effectively treating problems of interpretation of human action, text and other meaningful material. Based on this, it is an important method to be used in discussing “*The Second Sex*” by De Beauvoir. Therefore, this work is divided into six Chapters. The Chapter One deals with General introduction. Chapter Two focuses on the review of relevant manuals, philosophical journals, articles, internet sources which were gathered from authors that discussed further, the work *The Second Sex*. Chapter Three is a critical *exposition* of Simone De Beauvoir’s Philosophy and *the Second Sex*. Chapter Four discusses the hindrances of women liberation in her whole range of being in the work. Chapter Five elucidates the trends of Feminism; discusses *The Second Sex* influence on women liberation in Africa and Chapter Six gives an articulated *conclusion of the work*. With its attendant conclusion, it suggests means of achieving woman liberation according to the minds of pro-women protagonists and African women in general.

## 1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

### 1.7.1 Woman

The word woman according to Wikipedia encyclopedia is a “female human. Woman is usually reserved for an adult female human as constricted with girl”<sup>10</sup>. Womanhood is a state of being woman having passed the menarche. Woman is an adult female person as distinguished from a girl or a man, biologically female capable of bearing offspring. Woman is usually reserved for an adult with the term girl being the usual term for a female child or adolescent. The term woman is also sometimes used to identify a female human, regardless of age as in phrases such as women’s right.

Etymologically, the term woman has progressed over the past millennium from ‘wifmann to wimmann to wumman, and finally, the modern spelling woman’ Wifmann means “female human” whereas we mean “male Human,”<sup>11</sup>. It is a popular misconception that the term “woman” is etymologically connected to “womb” for womb is actually from the old English word “wambe” meaning “stomach.”<sup>12</sup> Brianna Seelay in her article “what does it mean to be a woman?” Writes that “woman is an adult of the human race”. She is the opposite of man, therefore, distinguishes a man from a woman.”<sup>13</sup> A woman is a female. “Menstruation, deflation, pregnancy, child birth, lactation, and biological preparedness differentiate a woman from a man.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, a woman is an

entity different from a source of value in her own right. She is being capable of identifying herself as a human being with her accomplishment

Tota Mulier in his work “utero” writes that, “Woman is a womb woman, has ovaries, a uterus, and these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, and circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. The woman is a female.<sup>15</sup>” A female is a female by virtues of certain lack of qualities according to Aristotle who defined woman as “the female nature as afflicted with a nature defectiveness”<sup>16</sup>. St Thomas Aquinas defines woman as,

An imperfect man, an incidental being. This is symbolized in Genesis where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet called a supernumerary bone of Adam humanly is male and man defines Adam . This humanly is male and woman not in herself but as relative to him but this is unjustifiable, for a woman is an autonomous being as men in the human creature<sup>17</sup>.

Father Michelet writes that “woman is a relative being”<sup>18</sup> and thus relatives of woman position was upheld clearly by Benda in his rapport d’ uriel:

The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself. Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man and she is simply what man

decrees; thus, she is called the sex by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being.<sup>19</sup>

For Benda, woman is sex-absolute sex, no lease, she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, and she is the incidental, inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject. He is the absolute while she is the other. The term woman is usually reserved for an adult with the term girl being the usual term for a female child or adolescent. The term woman is also sometimes used to identify a female human, regardless of age as phrases such as 'women's right'. Thus, the word woman means any female human, specifically, it means an adult female human as contributed with girl.

### **1.7.2 Gender**

The word gender comes from both Greek and Latin word. In Greek word it means "gendere" meaning "to produce"<sup>20</sup> in Latin, it means "genus", meaning kind type<sup>21</sup> and in English , it is a grammatical word that "talks of person of masculine and feminine"<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the word gender encompasses the social expectations associated with masculinity and femininity. It's the social and cultural ways of describing the roles of males and females.

Gender is defined as "a relationship between man and woman both perceptual and material."<sup>23</sup> Genders is not determined biologically as a result of sexual

characteristics of either women or men but is constructed. Socially, it is a central organizing principle of societies and often governs the processes of reproduction and production, consumption and distribution. Gender is the social roles of men, and women similar to human nature, its essential epicene and social distinctions based on sex are arbitrarily constructed matters, pertaining to the theoretical process of social construction. However, gender refers to differences between male and female particularly in the case of women and men. The differences can be visualized in culture origin. This means that it is a social construct, a matter of nature, since cultures differ as well as the expectation and roles for male and women itself.

Hence, it means that a person exists and chooses the way he or she can act. A person can choose to act in a different way either to be a good person or a cruel person. According to Aristotle, this concept was introduced by the Greek philosophers' Protagoras meaning Masculine, Feminine and Neuter. Henry Waton Fowler stated that the definition of the world pertains to this grammar related meaning. He opines that:

Gender is a grammatical term only. To talk of persons of the Masculine or feminine gender, meaning of the male or female sex is neither a jocularity permissible blunder. Gender refers to 'the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles, and relationship

between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.<sup>24</sup>

While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviour including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within house, schools, communities and work place. According to World Health Organization, gender norms, roles, and relations influence people's susceptibility to different health conditions and diseases, and affect people's enjoyment of good mental, physical health and well-being. Genders also have a bearing on people's access and uptake to health services and on the health outcomes they experience throughout the life-course. It also requires government to ensure that health policy program services and delivery models are responsive to the needs of women and man in all their diversity

### **1.7.3 Sex**

The term sex is referred to as "either of the two reproductive categories, male or female ,of human, animals and plants."<sup>25</sup> It is viewed as "either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that is distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures."<sup>26</sup> It is the sum of the structural, functional, and behavioral characteristics of organisms that are involved in reproduction, marked by the union



of gametes that distinguish male and female, “either of the two divisions, male or female, into which persons, animals, or plants are divided with reference to their reproductive functions.”<sup>27</sup> The character of being male or female distinguished them.

#### **1.7.4 Human Nature**

There are many definitions of human nature. According to Oxford English dictionary, “human nature is the general psychological characteristics, feelings and behavioural traits of human kind regarded and shared by all human.”<sup>28</sup> According to Plato, the human nature is of “tripartite structure of the soul, the immaterial mind, and material body. It is the soul that knows the forms. The soul exists before birth and after death. The soul is divided into three parts namely reason, appetite, and spirit”<sup>29</sup> For Plato, the social aspect of human nature is essential because we need our social interactions from other person’s talents, aptitudes and their friendship. For him, persons differ in their nature. Individuals dominated by reason are philosophical and seek knowledge, individuals dominated by spirit or emotion are victory loving and seek reputation, while individuals dominated by appetites are profit loving and seek material gain. Although each individual has a role to play. Reason ought to rule the will or spirit and appetites. According to him, good societies produce good people while bad societies tend to produce bad individual who in turn produces bad societies. This shows that there is a parallel between a

proper functioning individuals and proper functioning societies. Further, human nature is the qualities common to human beings. It is an ordinary human behaviour that is considered as less than perfect. They are unique elements that form a basic part of human life and distinguish it from other animal life.

According to Aristotle's theory of human nature, he upheld the soul as "a set of faculties including rationality".<sup>30</sup> Plato was a dualist who believed that man is composed of two substances namely, material body and immaterial mind while Aristotle rejects this view and holds that man, plant and non - human beings have different ways or structures or forms of functioning. Aristotle as a biologist holds that different things have a different form or structure. The form of something does not exist independently. It is not an entity in itself rather it is the specific pattern, structure or form of a thing which defines how it exists and functions. Thus for Aristotle, it makes no sense to talk of a soul or mind without a body. For the essence of a person is embedded and intertwined with their matter. Aristotle's distinction is between their rational component and their emotions and desire. In theoretical and practical reasoning for example, Aristotle upholds that even if a computer thinks without bodies, their thought still depends on material components. Thus, one can say that the human nature is the distinguishing characteristics, ways of thinking, feeling and acting which humans intend to have naturally independent of the influence of culture.

Human nature is “the core characteristics like feelings, psychology, behaviour shared by all people. One has different experience of the human in our life and this is where the disputes begin.”<sup>31</sup> Some scholars would uphold that humans are good or bad predators or capable of great kindness. Human nature refers to the disguising characteristics of man including the ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Philosophers argued about human nature based on their schools of thought from human history. In classical Greece, Plato argued that humans were rational and social animal and he connected the human nature with their souls and ability to reason rather than their bodies. Aristotle described the human nature in different dimension. According to him, ‘the philosophical study of human nature originated with Socrates, who turned philosophy from the study of the heavens to the study of human things.’<sup>32</sup> Human nature can be regarded as both a source of norms of conduct or ways of life, as well as presenting obstacles or constraints on living a good life.

In Chinese philosophy, human nature was considered to be essentially good by Confucius and Mencius. While in Heun Tzu, it was “essentially evil.”<sup>33</sup> For them, the purpose of existence is to reach one’s highest potential as a human being,

In Christian theory, human nature was argued or conceived in two ways, namely, “the spiritual Biblical and theistic, and the second is Natural, cosmical and

department of human nature”<sup>34</sup>. In the Bible, human nature was described in the book of Genesis where mankind has its origin in God, who is its creator. Human bears the image of God and are to rule the rest of creation.

Han Morgenthau writes that “human nature in which the objective laws of politics have their root has not changed since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavored to discover these laws’.<sup>35</sup> Morgenthau’s view of human nature is thus exemplarily essentialist. Human nature for him was historical and unchanging. It gives rise to objective laws of politics that can subsequently be discovered. The Morgenthau’s idea of human nature is opposed to the ideas in *the Second Sex* for Beauvoir is an existentialist who held that existence precedes essence. Existentialism is a philosophical term which posits that individuals create the meaning of their lives which is as opposed to essentialism that held the idea that human nature has a goal; for Beauvoir, humans are free to choose their own destiny.

### **1.7.5 Existentialism**

Existentialism is a philosophical movement, especially of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that stresses the individual’s position as a self – determining agent responsible for his or her own choices. It is a modern philosophical movement stressing the importance of personal experience and responsibility and the demands that they make on the individual who is seen as a free agent in a deterministic and

meaningless universe. According to Cambridge dictionary , ‘‘Existentialism is a chiefly 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad’’<sup>36</sup>

Existentialism Philosophy centered upon the analysis of existence and of the way human finds themselves existing. Human exist first and then each individual spends a lifetime changing their essence or nature. ‘‘Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes on individual existence, freedom and choice. It is of the view that human define their own meaning in life and try to make rational decisions despite existing in irrational universe.

The philosophical importance that the existentialist place upon emotion has been influential, legitimizing a whole domain of philosophical research even by philosophers who have no interest in existentialism. Existentialism was ‘‘a philosophy that insisted that philosophy could and should deal very directly with real world topics like sex, death, crime, injustice, oppression, topics that have most frequently been approached abstractly within philosophical tradition’’<sup>37</sup>. So, it is a philosophical movement that upheld the idea or doctrine that man forms his essence, the course of the life resulting from his personal choices. It emphasises upon man’s creating of his own nature as well as the importance of personal

freedom, decision and commitment. Existentialism is a practical philosophical human life rather than abstractions.

One can say that existentialism is a term applied to the works of philosophers who share the belief that philosophical thinking begins with human subject, not merely the thinking subject but the acting, freely, living human individual. Its virtues are authenticity and freedom. Its ideas are upheld to concrete human experiences. For existentialist, religion, society is not responsible for giving meaning to individual life but each individual not society or religion is responsible for giving meaning to individual authentic living. Hence, the fundamental doctrine of existentialism is that “existence precedes essence”<sup>38</sup>. Sartre described existentialism as “the attempt to draw all the consequences from a position of consistent atheism.”<sup>39</sup> For him, existence precedes essence which means that the most important consideration for individuals is that they are individuals independently acting and responsible, conscious being (existence) rather than what roles, labels, stereotypes definition or other pre-conceived categories that individuals fit (essence). The actual life of the individual is what constitutes, what could be called their true essence instead of their being an arbitrarily attribute essence others used to define them. Thus, human beings through their consciousness create their own values and determine a meaning to their life.

Existentialism is a philosophy concerned with finding self and the meaning of life through free will, choice, and personal responsibility. The belief is that people are searching to find an outlook and personal choices become unique without the necessity of an objective form, of truth. An existentialist believes that a person should be forced to choose and be responsible without the help of laws, ethnic rules or traditions. Existentialism takes into consideration “the human free will, human nature chosen through life choices, personal responsibility and discipline a person is best when struggling against their individual nature”<sup>40</sup>. Decisions are not without stress and consequence. Existentialism considers society as both natural and unnatural. For them, its traditional, secular and religious rules are artistry. The existentialists Philosophers upheld that worldly desires are futile. It is on this note that their ideas have impact on society when there was a deep sense of despair following the great depression and World War II. There was a spirit of optimism in the society that was destroyed in World War I and its mid- century calamities, in 1970s. Thus, the existentialist philosophers articulated this despair as a popular way of thinking and reasoning with the freedom to choose one’s preferred moral belief system and life style; for instance, an existentialist could either be a religious moralist, agnostic relativist or an amoral theist, like Kierkegaard was a religious existentialist, Nietzsche an anti-Christian, Beauvoir, Sartre and Camus were atheists.

Most importantly, the existentialist believes that if Simone or society impose any belief on somebody or individual, it is very arbitrary, they uphold that no value, rules should be imposed on any individual for these actions destroy individualism and makes a person become whatever the people in power desire, then, they are dehumanized and reduced to being an object. Hence, existentialism stresses that a person's judgment is the determining factor for what is to be believed rather than religious secular or traditional values or world view.

According to Soren Kierkegaard, 'each individual not society or religion is solely responsible for giving meaning to life and living it passionately and sincerely and authentically'<sup>41</sup>. Jean Paul Sartre was the first prominent existentialist philosopher who posits the idea that "what all existentialist have in common is the fundamental doctrine that existence precedes essence as scholar Frederick Copleston explains."<sup>42</sup> In 1945, Sartre himself defined existentialism as the attempt to draw all the consequences from a position of consistent atheism. In his work, "existentialism is Humanism. Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards."<sup>43</sup> However, according to philosopher Steven Crowell, defining existentialism has been relatively difficult and he argues that it is better understood as a general approach used to reject certain systematic philosophies rather than as a system philosophy itself. It means that a person



exists and chooses the way he or she can act. A person can choose to act in a different way, neither to be a good person nor a cruel person.

### **1.7.6 Sexuality**

The long nineteenth century was a unique period in the history of sexuality. During that era and in contradiction to what has gone before and was to come after, sexed bodies were regarded as stable platforms that expressed the gender and sexuality natural to them. “The notion of sexuality as a thing, apart from sex did not emerge until near end of the century; until 1890 or so, male and female established the material evidence for social identity of individuals and the natural reproductive force of sexual desire”<sup>44</sup>.

The Cambridge English dictionary, defines “Sexuality as someone’s ability to experience or express sexual feeling.”<sup>45</sup> Sexuality is “the capacity of humans' erotic to experience and responses.”<sup>46</sup> A person’s sexual orientation can influence the sexual interest and attraction for another person. “Sexuality may be experienced and expressed in a variety of ways including thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, values, behavior, practices, roles and relationship”<sup>47</sup>

Thus, these characteristics can be manifested physically, biologically, socially and emotionally. Some of these aspects deal with the human society on one’s sexuality. Thus, sexuality is affected by cultural, political, religious, philosophical, ethical, legal and moral aspect of life of human being. Sexuality is much more than body

parts and sex, it is our gender identity. It includes gender roles. Thus, sexuality includes how humans feel their bodies. Sexuality is a person's sexual orientation or preference. The philosophy of sexuality is the study of the concepts and proposition surrounding its central protagonist. It is like the philosophy of science, art, or law. In this case, its practitioners focus on conceptual, metaphysical and normative questions. Sexuality deals with ways sex, sexual violation, sexual intimacy, and sexual orientation are dealt with, including turning men and women into sexual object. According to Gayle Rubin, contemporary feminists theories' upholds that multiple possibilities for sexuality is "the nexus of relationship between the genders, much of the oppression of women is borne by, meditated through, and constituted within .It is also the feelings and activities connected with a person's desire."<sup>48</sup> Sexuality therefore, suggests identity .sexual orientation and sexual expression, which have been defined through feminist theory as well as through queer theory. In other words, it is a site of women's domination and a potential resource for resistance, self –definition and subjectivity

Sexuality is the quality, art and state of being sexual. It is the condition of having sex or sexual activity. Also, it is the expression of sexual receptivity or interest especially when excessive. Sexuality is much more than body parts and sex. It is our gender identity. It includes gender roles that are sexual orientation. According to Urban Dictionary, sexuality includes how we feel about our bodies, we call that

“body image, and poor body image can have a profound effect on our ability to have healthy relationships. A person with poor body image may not think they deserve a good partner, and so they may be willing to settle for someone who will not respect them or may even abuse them.”<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, sexuality is an integral part of who we are, what we believe, what we feel and how we respond to others. Sexuality is just one of those things one is born with, one does not choose it, it is just part of who one is, whether he or she is physically, emotionally and sexually attracted to males and females.

### **1.7.7 Sexism**

Sexism means discrimination against people because of their sex. Anything unfair to male or females just because they are male or female is an example of sexism. Sexism is “the belief that one sexually male or gender is superior to people of the other sex or gender.”<sup>50</sup> It is an unfair treatment or discrimination based on the difference of sex or gender. It is also unequal opportunity arising from the cultural dominance of one gender over the other. It leads to assumption of people to behave in accordance with or deviate from a gender role.

However, if looked at, sexism is similar to racism. They are both types of discrimination. It is a discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards members of the opposite sex. For instance, the unfair treatment of a person on the basis of prejudice, male chauvinism and discrimination in employment. Sexism means

discrimination against people because of their sex. Sexism is one of those things that always existed and probably always will exist, but do seem to get a little better with time, for instance, when women are paid less than men for the same work that is sexism. According to Fred R. Shapiro, In November 18, 1965, the term sexism was coined by Pauline M. Leet during “a student faculty forum at Franklin and Marshall College. She defined it by comparing it to racism. Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on a person’s sex or gender.”<sup>51</sup> Sexism can affect either gender but it is particularly document as affecting women and girls .it is the inability or refusal to recognize the rights, needs, dignity or value of people of one sex or gender. Sexism is also injustice. For example, the method of identifying the female from the male in different societies.

### **1.7.8 Feminism**

The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Although the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not gain widespread use until the 1970s, they were already being used in the public parlance much earlier; for instance, Katherine Hepburn spoke of the "feminist movement" in the 1942 film *Woman of*

the Year. Feminism has altered predominant perspectives in a wide range of areas within Western society, ranging from culture to law. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights , rights of contract, property rights, voting rights; for women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights including access to contraception and quality prenatal care; for protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay, against misogyny and against other forms of gender-specific discrimination against women.

The word Feminism is derived from the French word, “feminisme” meaning “advocacy of women’s right.”<sup>52</sup> According to Oxford dictionary, “it is the advocacy of women’s right, on the ground of the equality of the sexes.”<sup>53</sup> Feminism as political is the movement, ideologies and meaning advocacy of women’s right, social movement that share a common goal to define, establish and achieve political, economic, personal and social rights for women that are equal to those of men.<sup>54</sup> For instance, it seeks for the establishment of equal opportunity for women in education, employment, politics and economics. The feminist upheld that women should be allowed to have the same rights and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way.

Sylvester Idemudia Odi in his article defines feminism as:

A movement that pursues a re-evaluation of the traditional theories and methods of engaging in philosophy, it suggest a new way of engaging in philosophy different from the traditional way of engaging in philosophy on the ground that the traditional way of doing philosophy is not gender neutral. In fact, it argues that women have been marginalized intellectually since ancient times<sup>55</sup>

Lawhead, W.F in philosophical journal, observes that:

Feminism is a movement within philosophy and other disciplines that emphasize the role of gender to shaping how we think and how society is structured. Feminism focuses on the historical and social force that have excluded woman from full participation in the intellectual and political realms and strives to produce a society that recognizes women and men as both different and equal<sup>56</sup>

This showcases that feminism is a philosophical ideology that advocates for equal rights among different genders both male and female. They are of the view that women should be allowed to have equal opportunities like their male counterparts.

### **1.7.9 Patriarchy**

Etymologically, the word patriarchy is derived from Greek word, *patriarknes* meaning “Father of race” or Chief of a race” which is a compound of “*patria*” meaning lineage, descent, and “*arche*” meaning rule”<sup>57</sup>. Historically, the term

patriarchy was used to refer to autocratic rule by the male head of the family. However, in modern times, it is referred to as a social system in which power is held by adult men. Patriarchy is social system in which adult male holds power and predominance in role of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property in the domain of family over woman and children. Patrilineal society is “a society in which property title is inherited by the male lineage and descent is reckoned exclusively through the male line to the part that the male relatives take precedence over female relatives.”<sup>58</sup> Historically, patriarchy manifested itself in social, legal, political economic organization of range of different cultures.

According to Sylvia Walby, patriarchy is “a system of interrelated social structures which allow men to exploit women.”<sup>59</sup> But this definition according to April A. Gordon, allows for the variability and changes in women’s roles and in the order of their priority under different patriarchal system. It also recognizes that it is the institutionalized subordination and exploitation of women by men that is the crux of patriarchy. It can express itself through the emphasis on motherhood in favour of women as wage earners or some other roles. Domination by men over women is found in ancient, as far back as 3100BC as restrictions on a woman’s reproductive capacity as exclusive from the process representing or the construction of history.

According to some researchers, with the appearance of the Hebrews, there is also the exclusion of woman from the God humanity covenant.

In platonic dialogue, there is a respective virtue of men and women. He says:

First of all, if you take the virtue of man, It is easily stated that man's virtue is this, that he has been competent to manage the affairs of his city. so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care of a woman's virtue there is no difficulty in describing it as the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property indoors, and obeying her husband.<sup>60</sup>

The works of Aristotle portrayed women as “morally, intellectually and physically inferior to men. He saw women as the property of men, and claimed that women's role in the society was to reproduce and serve men in the household while male domination of women is natural and virtuous.”<sup>61</sup> Aristotle viewed male sex to be perfect and superior. He had a hierarchical ruling structure in his theories. Lerner claims that through this patriarchal belief system, it passed down from generation to generation that people have been conditioned to accept that men are superior to women.

According to Gearda Lerner in his work “*The Creation of Patriarchy*” states that Aristotle viewed that women had colder blood than men which made women not to evolve into men. “Further in the religious sphere, the Roman catholic church and



orthodox resisted priesthood from marrying, yet viewed the church itself as mother”<sup>62</sup> this shows that the church and human languages are to some extent matriarchy(mother tongue). Diderot’s encyclopedia, denies inheritance of paternal authority; stating that reason shows us that mothers have right and authority equal to those of fathers for the obligation imposed on children originated equally from mother and the father as both are equally responsible for bringing them into the world. Thus, the positive laws of God that relate to the obedience of children join the father and the mother without any.

The feminist theory maintained that patriarchy is “a social system that enforce gender roles and is oppressive to both men and women.”<sup>63</sup> It includes mechanism that evokes male dominance over women; hence this social construction can be overcome by revealing and analyzing its manifestation. Some scholars have called for culture reconstruction, which means that there is need for culture repositioning. There is need for reconstruction of the cultural concept of a society, there is need to change male chauvinism and sexism.

Garda Lerner in her work “*the Creation of Patriarchy*” argued, that “class society began with the dominance of men over women and developed into dominance of some men over other men and over all women.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the process of class formation incorporated an already pre-exist condition of male dominance over women and marginalized women in the formation of the rule of elite of men

in power. Again, she argues that before the development, male dominance was not a feature of human society in general. Women were key to the maintenance of human society and community but with a few exceptions, social and legal power was wielded by men and women could gain some status and privilege in patriarchy by limiting child-bearing capacity to just one man, so that he could depend on her children being his children. Further, she upheld that women were not conscious that they were subordinate until this consciousness began slowly to emerge, starting with the medieval era. She maintained that other groups like peasants, slaves, colonials, and ethnic minorities recognized that they are being subordinated and theories were developed for their liberation about their rights as human beings, about what kind of struggle to conduct in order to emancipate themselves but women did not and so, that was the question Beauvoir wanted to explore in her work "*The Second Sex*." De Beauvoir wanted to understand whether patriarchy system was what most scholars taught, or natural as God-given condition or whether it was a human invention coming out of a specific historic period. Hence, it was on this note that *The Second Sex*, shows that patriarchy is a human invention. It was created by human beings. It was created by man and woman at a certain point in the historical development of a human race. It was institutionalized before civilization and that is why it is difficult to deal with and combat it. Thus, patriarchy can be combated when civilization and reconstruction of culture are

formed. For love cannot exist in any relationship that is based on domination and coercion. Male cannot love themselves in patriarchal culture, if their very self-definition relies on submission to patriarchal and matriarchal rules but can only love when the value of mutual growth and self-actualization are found in all relationship when male and female are free from bondage to freedom, from lifelessness to loving

### **1.7.10 Africa as a Continent**

Africa etymologically, was derived from "*Afri* a Latin name used to refer to the inhabitants of Africa, which in its widest sense referred to all lands south of the Mediterranean (Ancient Libya)<sup>65</sup>. This name seems to have originally referred to a native Libyan tribe, then name is usually connected with Hebrew or Phoenician '*afar'*dust'. But in 1981 a hypothesis has asserted that it stems from the Berber *ifri* (plural *ifran*) "cave", in reference to cave dwellers."<sup>66</sup> Again, the word may be found in the name of the Banu Ifran from Algeria and Tripolitania, a Berber tribe originally from Yafran (also known as *Ifrane*) in northwestern Libya. The name signifies that the person named himself after Africa. One thing is certain, in Greek and Latin, the name Africa is of African Origins from the Egyptian Word "Afru-ika" or 'Motherland."<sup>67</sup> have Egyptian linguistic influences although both are Indo-European languages.

Africa is the world's second largest and second most-populous continent .It is at about 30.3 million km<sup>2</sup>,11.7 million square miles including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of Earth's total surface area and 20.4% of its total land area with 1.2 billion people as of 2016, it accounts for about 16% of the world's human population. The continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, both the Suez Canal and the Red Sea along the Sinai Peninsula to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the southeast and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. It includes Madagascar and various archipelagos. It contains fifty-four fully recognised countries, nine territories and two *de facto* independent recognition. Africa hosts a large diversity of ethnicities, cultures and languages. In the late 19th century, almost all the African countries were colonized by European countries. Africa also varies greatly with regard to environments, economics, historical ties and government systems. However, recently, most states in Africa originate from a process of decolonization. African nations have attempted to co-operate through the establishment of the African Union, which is headquartered in Addis Ababa. Africa is considered by most scholars to be the oldest inhabited territory on Earth, with the human species originating from the continent.

Today, African countries have borders that were drawn during the era of European colonialism. Since colonialism, African states have frequently been hampered by instability, corruption, violence, and authoritarianism. The vast majority of African

states are republics that operate under some form of the presidential system of rule. However, few of them have been able to sustain democratic governments on a permanent basis, and many have instead cycled through a series of coups, producing military dictatorships<sup>68</sup> as a result of marginalization of ethnic groups, instability has been the order of the day; but today, there is improved stability and economic reforms which have led to a great increase in foreign investment into many African nations. A political association such as the African Union has offered hope for greater co-operation and peace between the continents in many countries. African rising can also be attributed to the facilitated diffusion of information technologies and specifically, the mobile telephone.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

No scholar starts from a pointless position as Paul Ricoeur rightly said. So, it becomes necessary and pertinent to make a review of Simone De Beauvoir's famous work, "*The Second Sex*". De Beauvoir pointed out that biology, history; culture, ideological indoctrination, and patriarchy are the causes of women's oppression, subordination, subjugation, docility, passiveness in the World. However, many scholars from divergent fields of life have read *The Second Sex* and have given their different supports and criticisms. This study shall review the literatures of different scholars who support De Beauvoir's ideas and those that criticized her in order to explore their areas of differences and similarities in their opinions on *The Second Sex*.

Fiona Darroch observes that the central question of "what is a woman" is the question asked by Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. It is this question that drives Beauvoir's insight, passion and wit, which have initiated decades of musing by Feminist theorists on the relationship between the biological female body and gender. *The Second Sex* is both a liberating and sobering experience. Liberating in the sense that it celebrates the potentials of women, and sobering when one asked the questions of whether the possibilities of equality have been realized in the years since Beauvoir said "the free woman is just being born."<sup>68</sup> Beauvoir makes it clear

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from the beginning that woman is the “Other”. “The division of the sexes is a biological fact not an event in human history... Woman is the “Other” in the totality of which two components are necessary to one another.”<sup>68</sup> It is because of this idea of woman continuously being defined as the “Other” that has contributed to her subjectivity has largely been left unrealized. Woman’s emancipation is therefore a threat to patriarchal system. Again, Religion, theology and history has been used to prove woman’s inferiority in the world. Beauvoir provides a narration of the constructions of femininity as they occur in biological data, history and myth in order to maintain her position that woman is the “Other” and to minimize the threat to the patriarchal system. The female has been constructed by male through biological data, history, and myth in order to permanently project her as the “other” and to minimize the threat to the patriarchal system. Thus, Beauvoir rejects the biological determinism that has been used to maintain woman as inferior as she writes:

I reject also any comparative system that assumes the existence of a natural hierarchy or scale of values-For example, an evolutionary hierarchy, it is vain to ask if the female body is or is not more infantile than that of the male, if it is more or less similar to the apes and so on... it is only in human perspective that we can compare the female and male of the human species. But man is defined as being who is not fixed, who makes himself what he is. As Merleau Ponty puts it , man is not a

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natural specie, he is a historical idea. Woman is not a complete reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in her becoming that she should be compared with man, that is to say, her possibilities should be defined<sup>68</sup>

This shows that the definition of what is woman necessitated De Beauvoir's writing of the work, *The Second Sex*, so as to bring to light the need for women re-identification of their person as a being in the world. At this, Beauvoir makes an important statement that helps one to understand the relationship between the body and gender of woman and her being, For Beauvoir, 'the body is not a thing, it is a situation; an ever-changing that defined the body.'<sup>68</sup> The female body is operating in the world in different situations and in its own right.

Toril Moi in her work "*What is Woman*" responding to Beauvoir in *the Second Sex* writes:

When Beauvoir writes that the body is not a thing, but a situation, she means that the body in the World that we are, is an embodied intentional relationship to the world. Understood as situation in its own right, the body places us in the middle of many other situations. Our subjectivity is always embodied, but our bodies do not always bear the mark of sex.<sup>68</sup>

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The female body and the situation in which it exists are central to understanding of woman and her subjectivity. The body cannot be separated from its biology for Beauvoir, but equally, a woman's biology does not define her. Hence, she writes that,

... The body of the woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world. But the body is not enough to define her as woman. There is no true living reality except as manifested by the conscious individual through activities and in the bosom of society. Biology is not enough to give an answer to the question that is before us: Why is woman other.<sup>68</sup>

According to Toril Moi, Beauvoir did not dismiss the body when she rejects biological determinism and this has led to the misunderstanding of her work; *The Second Sex*. For Moi, contemporary feminist theorists tend to read Beauvoir through the lens of the sex and gender distinction; meaning that woman attains her true subjectivity through gender and not her sex. For Moi, Beauvoir is "opposing sex to gender, or biological essentialism to social construction."<sup>68</sup> Hence, Moi maintained that this misreading fails to grasp the essence of Beauvoir's work. For the female body is a key part of woman's lived reality as manifested between the conscious individual through activities. This understanding of the body has not been hugely influential to the development of feminist theory but to the

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development of theories responding to colonial violence and oppression. Beauvoir frequently makes cross reference to the enslavement of Africans and their treatment in the global west. As she writes:

But there are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of the Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism and the former master class wishes to keep them in their place that is the place chosen for them.<sup>68</sup>

Based on this, Toril Moi reminds one that Frantz Fanon in his work: *Black, Skin, White, Mask* analyzes race as bodily schema drawing on exactly the same concept as Beauvoir. Fanon writes, “What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, the black body is imprisoned in a situation defined by the white man, as is the female body. Fanon’s conceptualization of the psychological as well as physical impact of colonial violence and oppression was revolutionary and his work provided the foundation of contemporary theory which evolved within the same theoretical space as Beauvoir.

Furthermore, Beauvoir established the stages of woman’s life from birth to old age .She shows woman to be trapped in multiple types of psychosis because she is imprisoned by the male construction of femininity, by her “Otherness”. Thus, this

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can also be seen with Fanon's theorizing of the colonial encounter as a psychiatrist, He exposed the relationship between colonial violence and mental illness. Fanon describes "a regular and important mental pathology which is the direct product of oppression."<sup>68</sup> In both Fanon and Beauvoir, there is a manifestation of a systematic negation of the other person within types of psychosis. For Beauvoir, the mother enjoys the comforting illusion of feeling that she is a human being in herself and of value because she has a baby. But for Beauvoir it is an illusion. She maintained that the mother did not make the baby rather the baby makes itself within her. But this view of Beauvoir should not be upheld because the naturalistic tendency for woman is to deliver of baby. Motherhood is a nature's gift, power and authority of the woman. The joy for every woman is to be a mother. Hence, it is childish for one to think that babies make itself within a woman. Beauvoir upholds the view that females are unavoidable bi-product of a denial of female autonomy. They become hideous caricatures of the male. The body according to Beauvoir has the potential for both female liberation and oppression. There is therefore an intrinsic irony in woman's emancipation. She refuses to confine herself to her role as female because she will not accept mutilation which is also violence to human right. She hopes in the dawning of a new age when men and women would be equal through their differences.



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Sara Heinamaa in her work, “*What is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundation of the Sexual Difference*” writes that:

*The Second Sex* by De Beauvoir has been mistakenly interpreted as a theory of gender, because interpreters have failed adequately to understand Beauvoir’s aims. Beauvoir is not trying to explain facts, events or state of affairs but to reveal, unveil or uncover meanings of women.<sup>68</sup>

She explicates the meaning of woman, female, and feminine instead of theory. Beauvoir’s work “*The Second Sex*” presents a phenomenological description of the sexual difference. According to Sara Heinamaa, Butler’s presentation of Beauvoir’s work, *The Second Sex* is incorrect. The reason is that Butler viewed *The Second Sex* as a Sartrean voluntarist and states that her own Foucaultian view about sex and sexuality questions Beauvoir’s basic concepts. Butler’s ideas of free will are detached consciousness without body or sex.

Sara Heinamaa went on to submit that:

*The Second Sex* is not a voluntarist work in the Cartesian or Sartrean sense. Beauvoir’s notion of the subject should not be identified with Descartes cogito or with Sartre’s being-for-itself rather it is closer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s body-subject intertwined with the world.<sup>68</sup>

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The decision made by such a subject should not be conceived as acts of free will rather they are bodily postures or attitudes taken in specific situations. Heinamma's conviction is that Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is "a phenomenological study not an ideological definition or a sociological explanation of the complex, many sided phenomenon named "the sexual difference."<sup>68</sup> For her, Beauvoir's work has been misinterpreted by most Anglo-American feminism. Beauvoir starts the second part of her book with her well-known claim that 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman'. Some scholars present Beauvoir's idea of becoming a woman as a process of socialization but Beauvoir claimed to maintain that sexual difference is to understand through phenomenological study of meaning and their constitution in action and practices rather than causal explanation. Beauvoir does not offer a voluntary theory of gender but develops a phenomenological description of the meaning of sexual difference of biological determinism and an internal critique of it.

Furthermore, Linda Zerilli states believes that the beginning of *The Second Sex* by Beauvoir is a form of mimetic writing and writes:

Beauvoir does not uncritically adopt but subversively inhabit the putative impartial male voice and deduce the reproductive function of the women from that of the female, the passivity of the female from that of egg. Mimicking the language of reproductive biology, Beauvoir exposes a comic

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absurdity that signal a lack of scientific certitude  
.It is in the gaps of this discourse that the meaning  
of the word female will stand revealed.<sup>68</sup>

Beauvoir did not step out to explain women's lives by femaleness or femininity but to describe the plurality of actions and practices that constitute the meaning of woman. She does not wish to find the cause of mental or physical differences between men and women; nor was she interested in isolating the natural from the cultural. Rather she aims at studying the meaning involved in sexuality in all ramifications both its complexity and problem. Thus, it is a phenomenological approach to life. Beauvoir's phenomenological approach can be discovered and understood, even though there are some contradictions. For instance, in the section devoted to that of biology and otherness, she writes that woman is "other but in a footnote that this definition is given from "a man's point of view, and is biased in disregarding the reciprocity of subject and object."<sup>68</sup>

Again, Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany –Chevallier, in their work, "Translating "*The Second Sex*" in Tulsa Studies in Women Literature" write that: "in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir focuses attention on women in all stage of life and throughout history."<sup>68</sup> The method was revolutionary. Never had there been such an extensive study on the subject, woman. Beauvoir collected every scrap of empirical information she could find and came out with the conclusion that

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wherever and whenever women function in society, a basic inequality with men exists .So, she set out to deconstruct the myths and inventions that force a woman to live as a secondary being.

Constance and Shellia, maintained that Beauvoir is of the view that the inequality among women was created through history in every discipline and in all areas of human existence. In other words, femininity denotes a secondary form of existence. They submit that Beauvoir's statement that one is not born but rather becomes a woman means that women are constructively not born but determined. For them, there is nothing essential to *The Second Sex* and that femininity is learned through socialization and is not natural.

To buttress further , Meryl Altman states that while “Beauvoir’s work helped the second-wave feminist see the difference between natural sex and socially constructed gender, she never formulated the distinction in those terms.”<sup>68</sup> The formulation, imposition and entronement of such idea would have obscured more than it would have illuminated her view. Beauvoir’s honest lucidity about the way class and race loyalties are impediments to female solidarity is never outdated. Her discussion of the predicament of the adolescent girl, who is condemned to be seen rather than to do, remains unparalleled.

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Moreso, Huguette Bourchardeau, the author of “A New Biography of Beauvoir,”

writes that:

She had enormous influence on women of my generation and those who followed. When I was young, I was not only impressed by her theoretical work, but also by her way of life... She was like an open window... She struggled to free herself from conformism and to play the card of freedom<sup>68</sup>.

This shows that Huguette actually upheld Beauvoir in high esteem. Beauvoir remains a good icon of women liberation, who wants to stay away from conformism and also to educate the public or women on the essence of recognizing their identity as human being, not just a female but a woman indeed. She upheld Beauvoir as a legend, a young female philosopher, who is actually an existentialist.

Toril Moi in her work “*The Adulteress Wife and Simone De Beauvoir: The making of an Intellectual Woman*” writes that: “the roots of *The Second Sex* is in De Beauvoir’s realization that life had been affected in countless ways , by her having been born a girl.”<sup>68</sup> Moi seriously attacked Parshley’s translation of *The Second Sex*. According to her, Parshley cuts the languages and was philosophically incompetent. Based on language, Toril Moi upheld that Parshley repeatedly failed to recognize terms from philosophy and existentialism. As a result, authenticity for

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instance, becomes real, while alienation, sometimes, becomes protection. Parshley's seeming innocent of Simone De Beauvoir existentialist opposition to the concept of human nature and her agreement with the fundamental Sartrean principle that "existence precedes essence,"<sup>68</sup> repeatedly paraphrased De Beauvoir in a way that suggested that she believed in a special female nature which is the exact opposite of her position."<sup>68</sup> For Moi, this problem in Parshley's interpretation of Beauvoir made it difficult to discover what De Beauvoir actually thought essential on feminist issues. She falsely suggests that De Beauvoir wanted women to become like men and oppose motherhood. But Beauvoir's original French work shows that she wanted motherhood to become free choice for a woman. Hence, Toril Moi maintained that Parshley's translation damaged Simone De Beauvoir's intellectual reputation. This is because it made De Beauvoir look like a fuzzy thinker. Moi remarked that *The Second Sex* has the problem of misinterpretation. For him, there is a mishandling of the key terms for gender and sexuality; an inconsistent use of tenses, and the mangling of syntax, sentence structure and punctuation.

*The Second Sex* again was reviewed by Kristana Arp's. In her work. "*The Bond of Freedom: Simone De Beauvoir's Existential Ethics*," She writes that *The Second Sex* has inspired mixed responses from feminists over the years, though most

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people do not recognize it as a foundational text of second wave feminism. Thus, Arp compares Parsley's translation with that of Constance Border and Shella Malovany- Chevalier. According to her, Parsley translation is dry, prissy and mannered, while Shella's translation is more fragile, it follows the French more exactly and captures the ideas of De Beauvoir's work .

Richardson Jojo, after reading "*The Second Sex*" submitted that *The Second Sex* disassembles feminine inferiority with rare methodical tact. For example, Beauvoir's description of male and female relationship as the subject and the other led him to the consideration of the possible societal effect of a hypothetical "third sex. This made him raise the following questions. How would the pre-existing relationship change? How would they vary as the dominance of this sex change? He, then, answers these questions by asserting that:

Then, it occurred to me that one might consider homosexual. The third sex", this would certainly provide interesting insight on our current observation regarding homosexuality. It seems to me that one could argue women have been empowered by this Third Sex" as they, by default, no longer reside in the lowest position .Perhaps, this has come on the femininity of homosexuals.<sup>68</sup>

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The obvious implication of Richardson's assertion is that, *The Second Sex* is advocating for homosexuality and lesbianism. But this is a myopic and disordered view of De Beauvoir's work, one must submit.

According to Neonsolid Solidia, *The Second Sex* has an already well established reputation. According to him, the book described how hard it is to be a woman especially with regards to child bearing and social expectations. De Beauvoir points out the overall feeling of inferiority felt by women who live in a society where the other gender (male) is considered the standard by which they are judged. For him, De Beauvoir's famous work is sexist. She typed-casted woman in ways that most misogynists would not accept in this contemporary period. According to him, Beauvoir is both a Marxist, an extreme socialist, both economically and politically.

Pamela Church Gibson in her work, *To Care for Their Beauty, To Press up, is a Kind of Work: Simone De Beauvoir Fashion and Feminism*, writes that it is now over sixty years since the publication of the second sex, a pioneering text written well before most of the so called seminal text of second wave feminism. According to her, although many women, like Toril Moi have stressed, actually change their lives in the 1950s, this has not actually been the case in recent years. For her,



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feminists of the 1970s seemed to misread the text. She writes that “the work is a mixture of philosophy, psychoanalysis, literary criticism and a kind of field work and subjective sociological methodology.”<sup>68</sup> It could not be written within our specialized academy. She argued that Beauvoir has been unjustly treated, first, by those who did not appreciate the political nature of intervention in 1949 and second, by those who still read her work as an un-ambiguous attack on pleasure, in dress and self- adornment. Thus, it shows that Gibson’s view indicates that De Beauvoir’s work is being interpreted out of context.

Furthermore, Judith Butler opines that Beauvoir’s formulation of the theory that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” distinguishes the term “sex and gender.”<sup>68</sup> Butler and Maternity Chevalle in their English interpretation translated this formulation as one is not born but rather becomes woman. This is because in the context, the idea is used by Beauvoir to denote a woman as a construct or an idea rather than woman as an individual or one of a group. Butler argues that the work suggests that gender is an aspect of identity which is gradually acquired. Thus, Butler sees *The Second Sex* as a proud and radical understanding of gender.

In another development, Alfred Kinsey, remarked that even *The Second Sex* is an interesting work, it contains no original data of interest or importance to science.

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Deirdre Bair corroborates Kinsey's view when she writes that the critics of *The Second Sex* hold Beauvoir the guilty of unconscious Misogyny; that she separated herself from women while writing about them. Another prominent supporter of this view C.B. Radford maintained that Beauvoir was guilty of painting women in her own colours because *the Second Sex* is:

...Primarily a middle- class document, so distorted by autobiographical influences that the individual problems of the writer herself may assume an exaggerated importance <sup>68</sup>in her discussion of femininity

David M. Halperin writes that: "Beauvoir gives an idealized account of sexual relations between women, suggesting that they reveal with particular clarity, the mutuality of erotic responsiveness that characterizes woman eroticism."<sup>68</sup> A scholar Camille Paglia praised the second sex calling it brilliant and the supreme work of modern feminism.

Paul Mc Queen, argued that Simone De Beauvoir was one of the most influential thinkers of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The French writer, existential philosopher, political activist, and feminist, published dozens of works in her life time. After her death, her work *The Second Sex* offers valuable insight into the development of her theories and attitudes to light.

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Claudia Card, the Cambridge companion described Simone de Beauvoir as a philosopher and writer of notable range. For her, *The Second Sex* is ‘an influential work central to feminist theory, French existentialism and contemporary moral and social philosophy.’<sup>68</sup>

According to Susan Bainbridge, much has been written on Simone De Beauvoir, one of the French leading intellectual figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The sheer volume of her autobiographical writings testifies to her detailed and intelligent questioning of the nature of existence and her personal and public engagement in the world over the last part of a century. Nancy Bauer states that in the introduction to the second sex, Simone De Beauvoir notes that “a man never begins by establishing himself as an individual of a certain sex. His being a man poses a problem.”<sup>68</sup> Nancy Bauer began her book by asking: what kind of problem does being a woman pose? . Bauer’s aim is to show that *The Second Sex* dramatizes the extent to which being a woman poses a philosophical problem. The work is a call for philosophers as well as feminists to turn, or return to *The Second Sex*. Bauer explains that Beauvoir’s *Magnus Opus*, written a quarter-century before the development of contemporary feminist philosophy, constitutes “a meditation on the relationship between women and philosophy undervalued.”<sup>68</sup> She argues that the extraordinary effect of *The Second Sex* on women’s lives, then and now, can be

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traced to Beauvoir's discovery of a new way of philosophizing – a way ground in her identity as a woman. In offering a new interpretation of the second sex, Bauer strives to point out how philosophy can be politically productive for women, yet remaining a genuine philosophy.

Again, Emily R. Groshols remarks that the legacy of Beauvoir is yet to be properly assessed and explored for her. *The Second Sex* played “a central role in the profound shift in philosophy's self-understanding that took place in the latter half of the twentieth century and today offers new problems for reflection and novel means for appropriating old texts, its reflective iconoclasm can be compared to that of Desecrates Meditations.”<sup>68</sup> Its enormous and directly discernible impact on our social world has a sharp comparison with John Lock's two treaties of government. For her, the legacy of Simone De Beauvoir is the she has demonstrated many ways in which *The Second Sex* provoked deep philosophical thought. Beauvoir's method proceeds from her own immediate experience; her reflections had to find expression as narrative, autobiography and sometimes as argument.

In her contribution Irene Gammel submitted that “Beauvoir as a feminist icon and revolutionary thinker famously rejected conventional marriage.”<sup>68</sup> She empathically Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, passionately articulated her central argument when she wrote that:

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Women have been objectified and defined only in relation to men in a massive critical analysis of misogyny over years. The book was a model of erudition and philosophical prowess, rivaling and arguably outdoing the being and nothingness of Jean Paul Sartre with whom she shared a long life relationship<sup>68</sup>

Beauvoir's view on the liberation of woman holds that true autonomy is possible only when women can work and gain financial independence. Beauvoir opines that "it is an almost irresistible temptation for young woman to be part of a privileged caste when she can do so simply by surrendering her body; she is doomed to have love affairs because her ways are minimal."<sup>68</sup> The sentence gains distributing resonance through disclosures made in Beauvoir's unexpurgated letters to Sartre published in 1992. The letters reveal how unsavory Sartre was in tying young women to himself sexually by setting them up and supporting them financially, sadly with Beauvoir's help and full knowledge. This is what she called the servitude of masculine protection. In the end, Beauvoir articulated a deep division and maintained that it is either the intellectual woman must renounce "femininity and thus lose part of her humanity or "to accomplish femininity, she is required to be object and prey."<sup>68</sup>

According to Dorothy Kaufmann McCall, *The Second Sex* was published in 1949 when feminism was no longer or not yet a live issue. *The Second Sex* has come to be accepted as:

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A pioneering and uniquely ambitious attempt to explore within a philosophical frame work all aspects of woman situation, primarily Beauvoir's contribution however, seem to be undermined by the Sartrean existentialism, a philosophy which in the context of feminist theory is perceived as ideologically sexist.<sup>68</sup>

In the beginning, *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir makes it clear that she had adopted the ontological and ethical claims of Sartrean existentialism. Nancy Bauer views the situation as a key to the technical term in "The Second Sex," one that Beauvoir chose not to use here. For her, "situation has to do with the way that an individual as being –for- itself is tempted to take up being –in-itself in accordance with social norms."<sup>68</sup> This shows that Beauvoir differs sharply from Sartre whose voluntarism is in has him categorizing social norms as another species of being –in- itself, that is, one among many circumstance in an individual decision-makers life, all of which he can choose simply to overlook. Beauvoir uses condition instead of situation so as to refer to the ubiquity of misogynistic norms.

Margaret A Simon, argues that:

De Simone's book, *TheSecond Sex* reflects the feudalism,then predominant in psychoanalytic theory, Beauvoir attached its sexist concept of normalcy that effectively condemned women to dependent passive lives, she essentially turned psychological theory on its head, considering it as evidence of the psychological depths of woman's

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social and political oppression. She used these insights to demand woman's social economic and <sup>68</sup>political autonomy and to argue for an end to sexist educational practices, her critique of sexism and psychoanalysis exposed, as well as a critique of hetero sexism. The way that patriarchal ideology is lived out in sexuality, she saw lesbianism as an authentic alternative for women in a sexist society that offers and legitimates only inauthentic alternative

A meticulous and critical look at Margaret Simone, idea above would suggest that Beauvoir is an associate and advocate of lesbianism. Hence, her analysis of woman's oppression in *'The Second Sex'* is open to many criticisms. The reason is that its idealism is focused on her lack of practical strategies for women liberation; her tendency to generalize from the experience of European bourgeois women emphasis on women's historic ineffectiveness.

Mary Evans commented that Beauvoir's work includes an investigation of both fiction, and non-fiction investigation. *The Second Sex* gives a list which gives the impression of crossing disciplinary boundaries. Evans maintained that Beauvoir gives her readers an impression that depicts of the complexities of human lines, presented in such a way to stress both the existence of choice and the choices that the individuals might make. The problem with De Beauvoir's analysis of class struggle is that it omitted the consistent issue of the impact of the material world on individual lives and ideas; an aspect of human existence which is often absent from

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Beauvoir's concepts. This shows that Beauvoir possesses a legacy that is highly commendable even if she was poor in the financial terms. She has a cultural, capital as Pierre Bourdieu remarked. These characteristic enables children of educated parents to reproduce a privilege place in the world for themselves. For Mary believes that Beauvoir has an iconic status as the woman who led a generation of women out of darkness of oppression conditioned by male needs and desires.

In Penetole Deutscher's account, De Beauvoir is an intellectual narcissism. For instance, in his work entitled "*Conversion of Repetition*", Deutscher discusses Beauvoir's negative view of repetition and habit as a form of social existence. Deutscher notes that both forms of experience are central part to human existence. "Beauvoir's honest lucidity about the way class and race loyalties are impediments to female solidarity is hardly outdated. Her discussion of the predicament of the adolescent girl, who is condemned to be seen rather than to do remains unparalleled."<sup>68</sup>

Lori Marso writes that her line of argument depends heavily upon language. The French lies. It is not impossible to conceive of a language where the male was "other." Thus her criticism is highly contingent indeed. If we were to adopt the old



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Anglo-Saxon norm of prefixing both he (male) and female versions of “man” as opposed to only prefixing the female variations, then the linguistic critique would fail flat. She assumes that gender is entirely socially constructed and has no real answer to development in things like genetic or biological understanding which give rise to argument of a “biologically essential essence.”<sup>68</sup> Again, her engagement with psychology was largely based on Freud. Equally, she adopts the values of a patriarchal society and asks how women can be bent emancipated within them rather than calling for a withdrawal from that mode of living or better yet, It overthrows. Many people see this sort of feminism as the root of the struggle for liberation for all woman. This is because woman has to redouble her effort, she has to work twice as hard as possible since she is expected to have a career and do the women’s work. Thus, It may not be emancipation at all.

While these scholars criticize the work, Kelesie Colclough, was of the view that Simone De Beauvoir’s work, *The Second Sex*, should be recommended greatly to women. She holds that;

Beauvoir introduces us to the concept of the “other”. This concept is something that women experience all the time and boxing something up as the “other” is something men do, perhaps unknowingly. The “other” refers to women in contrast to man and not as an entirely separate, independent being.<sup>68</sup>

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A part of patriarchy from language, medicine to psychology, man is seen as the standard subject, the absolute, while women are the second sex. Again, Catherine Redfern, co-author argues that “the cultural representation of women is one of the new battle grounds for feminist activist and this fight will only be over when social attitudes and the internalization by men and women have been changed.”<sup>68</sup>

Lori J. Marso writes that *The Second Sex* offers a sophisticated and compelling theory of situated freedom challenging several assumptions prevalent in the mainstream canon. Her theorization of ambiguity as manifested in women’s situation illuminates the pernicious political meaning assigned to certain bodies. Furthermore, her political call to assume rather than seek to transcend our human ambiguity undergoes the master- slave confrontation as well as reductive theories of human existence that gives priority either to sovereign selves or the movement of history. Beauvoir equally illuminates how difficult it is for the oppressed to embrace their freedom. Hence, this shows that her theory demands that the society prioritizes equality of conditions as the first step towards enhancing freedom for everyone.

For her, "Beauvoir underlines the tragic ambiguity of women’s position in modern society."<sup>68</sup> They were increasingly working part-time and attending university thereby beginning to see themselves as deserving of equal professional

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opportunities as men and as being mentally capable as well. These ambitions dashed with society's demands on women to nurture and care for the children and husbands, Beauvoir wrote at a time when uncertainty about gender roles had been rising to the surface in Anglo-American society. She further opines that Beauvoir wrote directly and clearly of the complex network of assumptions about woman that had led to her oppression for centuries. Her philosophy of woman as the "other" is particularly resonant today. Beauvoir explained that the construction of woman as an object of sexual desires epitomized the power imbalance in society between men and women. The power differential is still at work in our psychological processes. It is an inequality that is exploited by the media.

Rosie Germain writes Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work, *The Second Sex*, laid the foundation for the second wave of feminism and is very essential for the feminist resurgence today. In *The Second Sex*, "Beauvoir harnessed existential, phenomenological and Marxist ideas to develop her theory on woman."<sup>68</sup> She argued that woman had been socially constructed as the absolute "Other"; thus, Woman had been the object in history, while man had been the subject. She encouraged woman to become conscious of their roles which she opined that the society had been constructed by patriarchy. She laid blame on men and women who, do not challenge the patriarchal ideology of oppression but collaborated with

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it. Thus, Beauvoir depicted female beliefs of the subjection to men as natural as bad faith and ultimately, a denial of their power to transcend and exert their freedom.

Beauvoir's work helped second- wave feminism see the difference between natural sex and socially constructed gender. She never formulated the distinction in those terms to impose it anachronistically. Honestly that would have obscured more than it would have illuminated. This shows that Beauvoir calls for normalcy among human creatures. Equality would make relationship between male and female better rather, than worse. There is need for economic equality. Society and tradition should provide good atmosphere for economic growth and quality as Virginia Valian stated in her work "why so slow." "As long as perfect economic equality is not realized in society and as long as customs allow the woman to profit as wife and mistress from the privileges held by certain men, the dream of passive success will be maintained in her and will hold back her own accomplishment."<sup>68</sup>

Obviously, *'The Second Sex'* is not a work one can skim through. Beauvoir was careful to supplement her own experience with other scholars like Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Parker, Francis Ponge etc.

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According to Kathryn T. Gines, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has major problem. The problem has to do with the way she deploys comparative and competing frameworks and oppression. Beauvoir describes the woman, the black, the Jew, the colonized and the proletariat in ways that suggests sexism on the one hand and racism, anti-Semitism, colonialism and classism, on the other hand, are comparative systems of oppression. But when pointing these key difference between women and other group, she set up competing framework of oppression, privileging gender difference in ways that suggest that woman's subordination is "a more significant or constitutive form of oppression than racism, anti-Semitism, colonialism, or class oppression".<sup>68</sup>

So, this showcases that Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is based on women oppression and not anti-black racism, class oppression, anti-Semitism and colonialism. For him, those scholars that support Beauvoir's idea in *The Second Sex* only maintained an epistemological stand point. He upheld that Beauvoir's supporters, in their attempts to enshrine Beauvoir in the gilded halls of philosophy duplicate her exclusiveness of women and colour and perpetuate the silencing of women voice that they decry in the discipline of philosophy.

But Beauvoir should be regarded as a philosopher, irrespective of the misinterpretation in *The Second Sex*. Philosophy aimed at employing crucial

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inquiry into every dimension of result and this she did in her work, *The second sex*. No wonder Harold H. Titus opined that “the life of a person who is mature mentally is integrated around a philosophy of life.”<sup>68</sup> Philosophy gives values and aids man to construct his or her belief with due deliberation and analysis which are the integral parts of the personality development. Precisely, philosophy constructs normal behavior and that is the way Beauvoir’s work, *The Second Sex*, came to address the areas in which the culture, family, society has failed. *The Second Sex* has come to help women acquire integral skills that will make their lives in the actual world and not live in a world of unreality; for according to Socrates an unexamined life is not worth living. Thus, Beauvoir earned a place in the canon of philosophy as Nancy Bauer insisted or stated, Beauvoir’s aspirations to write about being a woman are inextricably intertwined with her discovering of what I argue as both her own philosophical voice and a model for doing philosophical, work that lies waiting to be appropriated by philosophers.

Bauer problematizes the way in which Beauvoir has been neglected as a philosopher and states: “I can’t imagine anyone doubting that part of reason for this neglect is the simple fact of her having been a woman.”<sup>68</sup> Can we name a woman philosopher whose work has been sufficiently acknowledged? Again, Sabine Broeck, in her work “Ready De Beauvoir after Race” woman as slave:

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argued that, “the signifying and repertoire building power of de Beauvoir’s text has by way of their continuous dissemination and reception pre-ordained feminist epistemology until today.”<sup>68</sup> She argued further that the goal of ‘*The Second Sex*’ is to establish a philosophical position for woman in the most universalizing and general sense and to counter the white patriarchal mythology of woman. In addition to this, Broeck asserts that Beauvoir turns away from detailed use of her lived experience and use of history, despite her use of history and account of her own life experience as she writes in order to create a counter-space for woman as a generalization, as occupying a universal subject position that philosophy can recognize. Thus, she upheld that Beauvoir’s ultimate aim is to register white woman into philosophy. But this is not actually true because in recognizing Beauvoir’s Philosophical significance, one can observe that she made a philosophical import in women situation in the society.

According to F. Scarth, Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* is “a founding text of second Wave feminism and Beauvoir as an independent woman, an intellectual and a feminist was both a symbol and model for many women in that movement, though her writing on maternity has been controversial. *The Second Sex* is inextricably linked to the history of second-wave feminism”<sup>68</sup>. There is an intense hostile criticism of its theoretical structure, argument and language, and if there

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were no criticism of and no disagreement on the text, significant as *The Second Sex*, it would no longer be a Philosophy and would have no contribution to make. She upheld that it is difficult to read *The Second Sex* without considering its symbolic function and historical place within twentieth-century feminism, and how these two have intertwined to frame our reading it. *The Second Sex* is a ground breath analysis of the condition of women as one of socially produced alterity. Women, Beauvoir argues, are not born but made and they are made into the “other”, the very ground and condition for the masculine assertion of subjectivity. He is the subject, he is the absolute, and she is the “other.” Apart from this, *The Second Sex* emphasis on marriage, domesticity and motherhood has a scathing critique of institution in which women are trapped as dependents, living vicariously through their husbands and children, waging a war on dirt in lieu of any involvement in a board project. But the problem is that Beauvoir urge for women to become subject is specifically masculine construct. This is because, urging women to become subjects, without recognizing the partiality of that conception of subjectivity, is an act of urging them to become like men. Thus, the critics complain that Beauvoir’s work is masculinity that her painstaking analysis of the social construction of femininity, and of the damage inflicted on women in this process, amount to little repudiation. For instance, Mary Evans upheld that Beauvoir’s feminism is shaped by a patriarchal habits and values. She writes that



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“Beauvoir counsels the adoption, by women, of male habits and values and in fact place major importance on living like a childless rather singular employed man.”<sup>68</sup>

But this shows that Evans' view is instructive because she based her view on the interpretation of Beauvoir's life choice to explain her points on liberty. Beauvoir on her own chose to live a nontraditional life. She chose to avoid marriage and motherhood so as to be more involved in her intellectual pursuit and writing. Her lack of interest in marriage is her own choice and should not be generalized as an ideal for women.

Fredrika Scarth describes the *Second Sex* as “an ethical text driven by Beauvoir's pre-occupation with what possibilities have been closed off to women by patriarchal structures, oppression and inequality.”<sup>68</sup> Scarth provides a unique view of Beauvoir's work on *'The Second Sex'* describing it as authentic and ethical writing.

Having gone through the review of relevant literatures, it is pertinent to remark that scholars that supported Beauvoir and those that are against her work, *The Second Sex* failed to recognize the economic inequality that exists in the society among human species. This work observes that none of them has discussed the economic emancipation of woman which is essential to women liberation. For political equality without economic equality is useless. Therefore, political power is the

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handmaid of economic power. According to Laski, political equality therefore is never real unless it is accompanied by virtual economic equality. Hence, *The Second Sex* as a work is a clarion call on women to wake up from their mental, psychological and intellectual slumber and take up their position as human being not relying on the help of male counterparts.

The research work maintains that Plato's view on equality should be upheld and equal opportunity should be given to every human species. *The Second Sex* by Beauvoir is a feminine mystique which is concerned with expanding equality both in family and the society. However, De Beauvoir's ideas on abortion should not be upheld by any means because it is against nature. For life is life irrespective of who is involved. Fundamentally, in both physiological and psychological dimension of human life, there is always a noticeable difference in male and female disposition. But that should not make the woman to see herself as an object instead of a subject. There is the need for us to uphold gender differences rather than simple equality. The woman has right just as the male has right. Each should respect the human rights for a peaceful co-existence. *'The Second Sex'* has been misinterpreted by same scholars like Parsley but if looked critically, the essence of the work cannot be over-emphasized; for it encourages a good relationship between men and women and respect for human rights.

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## Endnotes

1. F. Darroh, "What is a Woman in The Second Sex", (*Literature & Theology Journal*, 22, (2008), pp.37-39.
2. F. Darroh, p.39
3. Simone De Beauvoir the Second Sex~uberty.org\wp~content2015.
4. Introduction to Simone De Beauvoir's *the Second Sex*:[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).2010.
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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

#### 3.1 Historical Ideas of French Revolution

French ideas and symbols were universally equated with self-determination and emancipation from servitude. The French Revolution was shaped by these distinct ideas. The revolutionary ideas were encapsulated in the revolutionary ideas such as “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity/”<sup>68</sup> The ideology of the French Revolution was complex. However, French revolutionary ideas were based on the political philosophy of the Enlightenment and the writings of the other scholars including other political systems. Many French revolutionaries had studied British government and society. They came to admire its constitutional basis, its separation of powers and its tolerance for individual rights and freedoms. The American Revolution of 1775-89 provided French reformers with a working example of revolution and a successfully implemented constitution. The ideas of the French Revolution were also shaped by grievances that were specific to 18th century France. Some of the key ideas of the French Revolution are: Liberty, equality, constitutionalism, and fraternity.

In the 18th century, liberty was “freedom from oppression, particularly oppression by the government. The most visible instruments of oppression in the *Ancien*

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*Régime* were *lettres de cachet*, or sealed orders signed by the king. These *lettres* had several functions but their most common use was to detain and imprison individuals without trial or due process”<sup>68</sup>. Several notable figures were imprisoned by *lettres de cachet*, like Honore Mirabeau for disgracing his family, and Voltaire, for defamatory writings. Another example of state oppression was the censorship of publications containing criticisms of the king, the aristocracy or the church. The *Ancien Régime* also used torture to deal with its opponents, though this declined in the late 1700s and was formally abolished in May 1788.

Again, equality was another shore-up to French Revolution. The social structure of the *Ancien Régime* was uneven and unfair, particularly with regard to taxation. The citizens of the Third Estate wanted equality, though some wanted greater levels of equality than others. The rising *bourgeoisie* wanted political and social equality with the nobility of the Second Estate. They favoured “a meritocracy which is a system based on ability irrespective of seniority or wealth.”<sup>68</sup> A society where rank and status were defined by ability and achievement, rather than birthright and privilege. Upholding this position, they looked to the newly formed United States where a revolution had transferred government to men of talent and ability. But the *bourgeoisie* were more reluctant about sharing political equality with the lower



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ranks of the Third Estate. They did not support universal voting rights, believing voting to be a privilege of the propertied classes.

Further, Fraternity which means “brotherhood.”<sup>68</sup> was another idea of the revolution. Fraternity suggested that the nation’s citizens were bound together in solidarity. It combined nationalism with love and concern for one’s fellow citizens. Fraternity was the most abstract, idealistic and unachievable of all revolutionary ideals. It was more prevalent in the early phase of the revolution, when the new government was churning out positive reforms like the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Many visual sources from 1789-90 show the Three Estates co-operating and working together to improve the nation. As the revolution progressed and political divisions emerged, this focus on unity and brotherhood. Until the modern era, most kings and governments claimed their authority came from God, a concept called divine right monarchy. But this idea was challenged by the Enlightenment scholars who replaced it with popular sovereignty. John Locke described popular sovereignty as “an idea in which the governments derive their authority from the consent and support of the people, not from God.”<sup>68</sup> It was based on the idea of a ‘social contract’ between individuals and their government, that philosopher like Jean-Jacques Rousseau advanced. An

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upshot of popular sovereignty is that if a government fails or mistreats its people, the people have the right to replace it.

In June 1789, there was the desire for Constitutionalism. This desire for a constitution, a written framework that defines the structures and powers of government was a feature of the French revolution. Frustrated with the failures and broken promises of kings and ministers, most revolutionaries wanted a government underpinned by a constitutional document. They uphold that a constitutional government would put an end to absolutism and arbitrary decision making. It would prevent abuses of power and create a government that worked for the benefit of all. Thus, the French revolutionaries looked to the United States Constitution, which was drafted in 1787 and enacted the following year. The American constitution created a democratically elected republic, with the branches of government and their powers clearly articulated. It also embodied Enlightenment political concepts like popular sovereignty, natural rights and the separation of powers.

Sequel to this desire, John Locke writing on the natural rights influenced the people. The concept of natural rights are rights and freedoms bestowed on all people, regardless of whatever laws or governments they live under. According to Thomas Jefferson, natural rights are “inalienable rights”<sup>68</sup> because they cannot be

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taken away. According to John Locke there were three natural rights namely, “life, liberty and property.”<sup>68</sup> Locke wrote that “All individuals were entitled to live in safety, to be free from oppression, to acquire property and have it safe from theft or seizure. It is the responsibility and the duty of government to uphold and protect the natural rights of individuals”<sup>68</sup>. Thus, this led to government’s protecting of natural rights and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen by the National Constituent Assembly in August 1789.

Further, the role of the Catholic Church in society and government was a divisive issue of the French Revolution. Many philosophers and French revolutionaries were vocal critics of the Catholic clergy. They condemned the wealth and profiteering of the Catholic Church, her exemption from taxation, her political influence, her suppression of new ideas and her neglect of the French people. Hence, the French revolutionaries who were anti-clericalists wanted to reform the clergy and limit her social and political power. Anti-clericalism shaped several revolutionary policies including the seizure of church lands, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and attempts to create a state religion. This made some of the enlightened philosophers, atheists.

The above show that the issue of liberty, equality, and fraternity has been a major influence on political thought of the French Revolution. J. Lewllyn and S.

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Thompson explains that the revolution marked the triumph of the people; that is, as it led to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. However, the exclusion of women rights and freedom in the declaration showed that many of the ideas inherent in it were ill worked out. It was not until 1791, when Olympe de Gouges' published a book on *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* that this was brought to limelight; this prompted the championing of feminine emancipation across the world. This was to align with the eloquent denouncement of social inequality and political oppression by Rousseau and the radical republican tradition of Babeuf, Buonarroti and Blanqui all the way, which as it were, also reflected in the works of Sartre, Fanon, Foucault and Bourdieu. Simone de Beauvoir was philosophically influenced by her reading of this history, readings of Hegel which was influenced by the interpretations of Kojève. She was also introduced to Husserl and Heidegger by her teacher Baruzi. Marx and Descartes were familiar figures in her philosophical vocabulary and Bergson was also early influence on her thinking. These, essentially, formed her enduring contributions to the fields of ethics, politics, existentialism, phenomenology and feminist theory, and her significance as an activist and public intellectual, which now is a matter of record. Her most influential contribution, *The Second Sex*, which is a critique of patriarchy, continues to challenge social, political and religious categories used to justify women's inferior status in the contemporary

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era. She was influenced by both Husserl's and Heidegger's focus on the significance of lived experience and on the ways that the meanings of the world are revealed in language. Heidegger turned to the language of poetry for this revelation. Beauvoir turned to the language of the novel and the theater. She looked to Husserl to theorize her turn to these discourses by insisting on grounding their theoretical analyses in the concrete particulars of lived experience. She looked to Heidegger to challenge the privileged position of abstract discourses. For Beauvoir, however, the turn to philosophy carried ethical and political as well as philosophical implications. It allowed her to explore the limits of the appeal, the activity of calling on others to take up one's political projects, to portray the temptations of violence, to enact her existential ethics of freedom, responsibility, joy and generosity, and to examine the intimacies and complexities of our relationships with others. Beauvoir attacked patriarchal indecency that was on trial. *The Second Sex* expressed patriarchal sense of injustice, demands for social, political, and personal change and alerted them to the connections between private practices and public policies. *The Second Sex* remains a contentious book no longer considered sexually scandalous, its analysis of patriarchy and its proposed antidotes to women's domination are still discussed. In other words, *The Second Sex* is a catalyst for challenging women's situations. Beauvoir borrowed the idea of master-slave dialectic in George Wilhelm Fredrick Hegel's phenomenology of

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spirit. This was considered by scholars as a key element in Hegel's philosophical system and, has influenced many philosophers, even till the present.

### **3.2 Tenets of Existentialism**

Existential philosophy is a dispassionate encounter with the perennial problems of life, in particular with the inevitability of death, its agony and the joy of love, the experience of freedom and the futility or otherwise of personal relationship. There is no agreed definition of existentialism but the existentialists share almost the same philosophical beliefs.

According to Simon Blackburn, existentialism is "a title for various philosophies that emphasize certain common themes like the individual, the experience of choice, and the absence of rational understanding of the universe with a consequent dread or sense of absurdity in human life." <sup>68</sup>The combination suggests an emotional tone or mood rather than a set of deductively related themes, and existentialism attained its pinnacle in Europe, following the disillusionment of the Second World War. However, the first significant thinker to stress such themes was Soren Kierkegaard whose work was regarded as the origin of existentialism. Existentialists' writing reacts against the view that the universe is closed, coherent, intelligible system, and finds in the resulting contingency a cause for Lamentation.

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They upheld that in the face of an indifferent Universe, men are thrown back upon their own freedom. Acting authentically becomes acting in the light of the open space of possibilities that the World allows. Different scholars who united in stressing the importance of these themes nevertheless, developed every different ethical and metaphysical system as a consequence. In Martin Heidegger, “existentialism turns into scholastic ontology”, in Jean Paul Sartre, existentialism is turned into a dramatic exploration of moment of choice and stress. In the theologians Barth, Tillich and Bultmann, it becomes a device for reinventing the relationship between people and God.”<sup>68</sup> Existentialism never took firm root outside continental Europe, and many philosophers have voiced mistrust of particular existentialist concerns, for example, with “being and non-being or with the libertarian flavor of its analysis of free will.

According to Richard H. Popkin et al, in their work *Philosophy Made Simple*, “existentialism answers in different ways the questions that men are inclined to ask about human existence. They are opposed to rational philosophy and they see philosophy as having a more positive role to play than any of the modern analytical movements are willing to ascribe to it.”<sup>68</sup> According to them, this kind of view has been extremely popular in France and Germany since the Second World War, and is becoming influential in the English-speaking world.

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In order to understand this philosophical theory, it is best to go back to its origin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to Soren Kierkegaard, regarded as the originator of the movement. As a Danish philosopher and theologian, Kierkegaard was against the rational Philosophy. In his work ,*The philosophical fragment, fear and trembling*', his central question was fundamentally what is the point of man's life? What sense can he makes out of human existence? What is the purpose of human events? Hence for him, all these are anguished, absurd, harrowing and meaningless. In his philosophical writing he developed argument on the basis of this view of human existence.

From Soren Kierkegaard, Existentialism moved to Nietzsche's message that God is dead. Thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre accepted this thought and Kierkegaard's portrayal of man's plight describes our situation and rejects the claim that the solution lies solely and completely in the act of belief in the decision to accept faith. However, for them, the existentialist is not concerned with understanding the philosophical questions that interest the analytic philosophers but in answering the questions of how is man to live in this irrational meaningless world.

According to Jean Paul Sartre, "existentialism is humanism."<sup>68</sup> hence to him, "existence precedes essence."<sup>68</sup> His view opposed traditional western philosophy which argues that essence precedes existence. In this respect, existentialism is a



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philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is of the view that humans define their own meaning in life and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe. The focus is on the question of human existence and holds that there is no explanation at the core of existence. It holds that as there is no God or any other transcendent force. It is the only way to counter this nothingness and hence to find meaning in life by embracing existence thus, existentialism maintained that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves. Existentialism emphasizes acting, freedom and decision as fundamental, and holds that the only way to rise above the essentially absurd condition of humanity is by exercising our personal freedom. It drew inspiration from the writings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, and also, German philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jasper, Edmund Husserl, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, were all important influences on the development of existentialism.

They based their arguments on the basis of individualism, a meaningless world. Existentialism is “a philosophical theory or approach that emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will fear, trembling and anxiety.”<sup>68</sup> Existentialist philosophers argue that traditional philosophical theory is too abstract from individual experience to explain their attitude. For them, people are defined only in

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so far as they act and are responsible for their actions. Hence, by these truths, which can be deduced as a form of consciousness, human beings create meaning for their lives and determine their own values and judgments. It is this existence on an individual level, therefore, that defines the essence of an individual. Other philosophical theory attempts to define essence by some pre-conceived notion, but existentialism critiques this by holding the crisis of self-awareness as an individual of higher importance than into which category the individual fits. That is not to say that, over time, the human being will not broaden his essence to something greater than himself; but that the origin of essence is derived from existence, and not vice-versa. Existentialism argues that it is the realization of individuality and the fear of responsibility that forces humans together, hence, by reading about existentialism, one is forced to create structures of thought to deter from the, perhaps, fact that the world around the individual is absurd. Existentialism is based on the stand-point of the actor rather than spectator. Hence, this thought influenced De Beauvoir's existential position that made her define existentialism as Jean Paul Sartre that is 'existence precedes essence'. The objects exist and man interprets them. Objects simply are there for man to interprets them. A greater emphasis is placed on Humanities. There is little faith in problem solving situations or vocational bias. There is much emphasis on the unique, the subjective and the effective elements in human experience. Knowledge is not for a career not even for its own sake but is a

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means for the cultivation of the self . The existentialist is against detachment and purely objective knowledge. Man is a creature not only of intellect but also of feeling. So knowledge should bring freedom since it delivers men from ignorance. The existentialists agree with the Socratic Method; it is the Question-Answer method. Nobody can be taught by another. Learning is a process of appropriation children in groups. Group method may stimulate the development of each individual within the group. The individual uses the group for his own personal fulfillment. They emphasize on awakening and intensifying the educed awareness of an interest in those problems without imposing them through external discipline. One's view leans more on freedom and responsibility of the pupils. Subjective responsibility is underlined. The individual is responsible for the consequences of the choices that he makes. The rebellious adolescent should not be humiliated but may be punished for intolerable behavior. In existential point of view, reason and logic are good, but not enough to explain all the aspects of life. They believe that sometimes, to get through situation, a person has to get his or her lower emotions involved, such as love, and alienation. According to the existentialist belief, reason dominates almost every part of our lives. This presence of scientific reasoning in our life, has deprived humans of their emotions such as connecting with the family, the community, nature, god and from self, leading to our alienation from many crucial things in life.

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For existentialism, Existence before Essence discusses the idea of man creating his own values and characteristics rather than God pre-determining them. However, the freedom to create one's ethics and morals based on experiences causes fear and anxiety of what is to unfold in the future. For instance, bad experiences in one's past can lead to the establishment of poor character, and vice versa. Again, they uphold that the encounter of nothingness and Freedom after Despair, once a man has achieved everything in life, he starts to feel empty, uneasy, and discontented. This feeling can only be ridden by confronting nothingness, alienation, emptiness, which then helps one to realize the freedom one has to create himself. However, with this choice comes great responsibility, for example, a person has the responsibility of who he becomes but his does not necessarily mean that a person desiring with greatness will be guaranteed to achieve it. In this line, Simone de Beauvoir describes existentialism as the necessity of being responsible for oneself. She contributed to refine the principle of existentialism, for her, one exists first and through one's acts, and then, one becomes something. She reasoned that in a godless World, one has absolute freedom and must exercise that freedom in order to live authentically.

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### 3.3 Life and Times of Simone De Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir was one of the most important writers of her generation. She is more known as an influential feminist theorist, and one of the key exponents of existentialism, a movement in philosophy that, as had been observed, emphasizes individual freedom and choice. Her autobiographical works are essential for an understanding of her era because they illustrate, with actual circumstances and events, the fundamental tenets of existential philosophy.

Simone-Ernestine-Lucie-Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir was born on January 9, 1908 in Paris to Georges Bertrand de Beauvoir and Françoise (née) Brasseur. Her father, George, whose family had some aristocratic pretensions, had once desired to become an actor but studied law and worked as a civil servant, contenting himself instead with the profession of legal secretary. Despite his love of the theater and literature, as well as his "atheism"<sup>68</sup>, he remained a staunchly conservative man whose aristocratic proclivities drew him to the extreme right. In December of 1906, he married Françoise Brasseur whose wealthy bourgeois family offered a significant dowry that was lost in the wake of World War I. Slightly awkward and socially inexperienced, Françoise was a deeply religious woman who was devoted

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to raising her children in the Catholic faith. Her religious, bourgeois orientation became a source of serious conflict between her and her oldest daughter, Simone. Simone de Beauvoir has a sister named H el ene (nick named "Poupette") who was born two years later in 1910 and Beauvoir immediately took to intensely instructing her little sister as a student. Apart from her own independent initiative, Beauvoir's intellectual zeal was nourished by her father who provided her with carefully edited selections from the great works of literature and who encouraged her to read and write from an early age. His interest in her intellectual development carried through until her adolescence when her future professional carrier, necessitated by the loss of her dowry, came to symbolize its own failure. Aware that he was unable to provide a dowry for his daughters, Georges' relationship with his intellectually astute eldest became conflicted by both pride and disappointment at her prospects.

Beauvoir, on the contrary, always wanted to be a writer and a teacher, rather than a mother and a wife and pursued her studies with vigor. Beauvoir began her education in the private Catholic school for girls, the Institute Adeline D esir where she remained until the age of 17. It was here that she met Elizabeth Mabile (Zaza), with whom she shared an intimate and profound friendship until Zaza's untimely death in 1929. Although the doctor's blamed Zaza's death on meningitis, Beauvoir

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believed that her beloved friend had died from a broken heart in the midst of a struggle with her family over an arranged marriage. Zaza's friendship and death haunted Beauvoir for the rest of her life and she often spoke of the intense impact they had on her life and her critique of the rigidity of bourgeois attitudes towards women. Beauvoir had been a deeply religious child as a result of her education and her mother's training. However, at the age of 14, she had a crisis of faith and decided definitely that there was no "God."<sup>68</sup> She remained an atheist just like her father until her death. Her rejection of religion was followed by her decision to

Beauvoir passed the *baccalauréat* exams in mathematics and philosophy. She then pursue and teach philosophy, preferring to live the life of an intellectual. In 1925, studied mathematics at the Institute Catholique and literature and languages at the Institute Sainte-Marie, passing exams in 1926 for Certificates of Higher Studies in French literature and Latin, before beginning her study of philosophy in 1927. Studying philosophy at the Sorbonne, Beauvoir passed exams for Certificates in History of Philosophy, General Philosophy, Greek, and Logic in 1927, and in 1928, in Ethics, Sociology, and Psychology. She wrote a graduate *diplôme* on Leibniz for Léon Brunschvig and completed her practice teaching at the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly with fellow students, Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lévi-Strauss -

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with both of whom she remained in philosophical dialogue; her philosophical approach was diverse. She was influenced by French philosopher Descartes, Bergson, the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl , Martin Heidegger, the historical materialism of Karl Marx , Friedrich Engels, the idealism of Immanuel Kant and G. W. F Hegel. In addition to her philosophical pursuits, de Beauvoir was also an accomplished literary figure, and her novel, *The Mandarins*, received the prestigious *Prix Goncourt* award in 1954. Her most famous and influential philosophical work, *The Second Sex* written in 1949, heralded a feminist revolution and remains to this day a central text in the investigation of women's oppression and liberation.

In 1929, she took second position in the highly competitive philosophy agrégation exam, beating Paul Nizan and Jean Hyppolite and barely losing to Jean-Paul Sartre who took first position. At the age of 21, Beauvoir was the youngest student that passed the *agrégation* in philosophy and thus became the youngest philosophy teacher in France. It was during her time at the École Normale that she met Sartre. Sartre and his closed circle of friends (including René Maheu, who gave her the life-long nickname "Castor", and Paul Nizan) were notoriously elitist at the École Normale. Beauvoir had longed to be a part of this intellectual circle and following her success in the written exams for the *agrégation* in 1929, Sartre requested to be



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introduced to her. Beauvoir thus joined Sartre and his colleagues in their study periods se to prepare for the grueling public oral examination component of the *agrégation*. She found in Sartre an intellect worthy to her own—a characterization that has led to many ungrounded assumptions concerning Beauvoir's lack of philosophical originality. For the rest of their lives, they were to remain "essential" lovers, while allowing for "contingent" love affairs whenever each desired"<sup>68</sup> Although never married, despite Sartre's proposal in 1931, having children together, or even living in the same home, Sartre and Beauvoir remained intellectual and romantic partners until Sartre's death in 1980.

Beauvoir had intimate liaisons with both women and men. Some of her more famous relationships included the journalist Jacques Bost, the American author Nelson Algren, and Claude Lanzmann, the maker of the Holocaust documentary, *Shoah*. In 1931, Beauvoir was appointed to teach in a Lycée at Marseilles whereas Sartre's appointment landed him in Le Havre. In 1932, Beauvoir moved to the Lycée Jeanne d'Arc in Rouen where she taught advanced literature and philosophy classes. In Rouen, she was officially reprimanded for her overt criticisms of woman's situation and her pacifism. In 1940, the Nazis occupied Paris and in 1941, Beauvoir was dismissed from her teaching post by the Nazi government. As a

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result of the effects of World War II on Europe, Beauvoir began exploring the problem of the intellectual's social and political engagement with his or her time.

Following a parental complaint made against her for corrupting one of her female students, she was dismissed from teaching again in 1943. She was never to return to teaching. Although she loved the classroom environment, Beauvoir had always wanted to be an author from her earliest childhood. Her collection of short stories on women, *Quand prime le spirituel* (*When Things of the Spirit Come First*) was rejected for publication and not published until many years later (1979). However, her fictionalized account of the triangular relationship between herself, Sartre and her student, Olga Kosakiewicz, *L'Invitée* (*She Came to Stay*), was published in 1943. This novel, written from 1935 to 1937 (and read by Sartre in manuscript form as he began writing *Being and Nothingness*) successfully gained her public recognition.

The Nazi Occupation inaugurated what Beauvoir has called the "moral period" of her literary life. From 1941 to 1943 she wrote her novel, *Le Sang des Autres* (*The Blood of Others*), which was heralded as one of the most important existential novels of the French Resistance. In 1943 she wrote her first philosophical essay, an ethical treatise entitled *Pyrrhus et Cinéas*. ( she can to stay) Finally, this period includes the writing of her novel, *Tous Les Hommes sont Mortels* (*All Men are*

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*Mortal*), written from 1943-46 and her only play, *Les Bouches Inutiles (Who Shall Die?)*, written in 1944.

Beauvoir's political commitments underwent a progressive development in the 1930's and 1940's. Together with Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Aron and other intellectuals, she helped found the politically non-affiliated, leftist journal, *Les Temps Modernes* in 1945, for which she both edited and contributed articles: "Moral Idealism and Political Realism", "Existentialism and Popular Wisdom" in 1945, and "Eye for an Eye" in 1946. Also in 1946, Beauvoir wrote an article explaining her method of doing philosophy in literature in "Literature and Metaphysics". The creation of this journal and her leftist orientation (which was heavily influenced by her reading of Marx and the political ideal represented by Russia), influenced her uneasy perception of Communism. The journal itself and the question of the intellectual's political commitments would become a major theme of her novel called *Mandarins* (1954).

Beauvoir published another ethical treatise, *Pour une Morale de l'Ambiguïté (The Ethics of Ambiguity)* in 1947. Although she was never fully satisfied with this work, it remains one of the best examples of an existentialist ethics. In 1955, she published, another work called "Must We Burn Sade?"<sup>68</sup> which again approaches the question of ethics from the perspective of the demands and obligations to the

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other. Following advance extracts which appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1948, Beauvoir published her revolutionary, two-volume investigation into woman's oppression, *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)* in 1949. Although prior to writing this work, she had never considered herself to be a feminist. *The Second Sex* solidified her as a feminist figure for the remainder of her life. By far, her most controversial work, *The Second Sex* was embraced by feminists and intellectuals, in as much as it was, also, mercilessly attacked by both the right and the left. In 1970, Beauvoir helped launch the French Women's Liberation Movement in signing the Manifesto of the 343 for abortion rights and in 1973, she instituted a feminist section in the journal, *Les Temps Modernes*. The 70's, was famous for being a time of feminist movements; as such Beauvoir participated in demonstrations to this regard, and continued to write and lecture on the situation of women, and signed petitions advocating various rights for women. Her later work included the writing of more works of fiction, philosophical essays and interviews. It was notably marked not only by her political action in feminist issues, but also by the publication of her autobiography in four volumes and her political engagement directly attacking the French war in Algeria and the tortures of Algerians by French officers. In 1970, she published an impressive study of the oppression of aged members of society, *La Vieillesse (The Coming of Age)*. This work mirrors the same approach she had taken in *The Second Sex* only with a

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different object of investigation. Beauvoir saw the passing on of Jean-Paul Sartre, her lifelong companion in 1980, which she recounted in her 1981 book, *La Cérémonie des Adieux (Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre)*. Following the death of Sartre, Beauvoir officially adopted her companion, Sylvie le Bon, who became her literary executor. Beauvoir died of a pulmonary edema on April 14, 1986.

### **3.4 The Second Sex in the Philosophy of De Beauvoir**

De Beauvoir's philosophical approach was sundry. *The Second Sex* was one of her greatest contribution to philosophy. It was published in 1949. Most philosophers regard the work as her "revolutionary magnum opus"<sup>68</sup>. Before *The Second Sex* was written, very little serious philosophy on women from a feminist perspective had been done; hence, *The Second Sex* brought a great influence on feminism. The work exposes a systematic treatment of the oppression of women, both historically and in the modern age were almost unheard of striking for the breadth of research and the profundity of its central insights.

The central argument in *The Second Sex* is that since patriarchal time, women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable with that of racial minorities. That is in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race. According to Beauvoir, this secondary standing is not imposed by natural feminine

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characteristics but rather, by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. Beauvoir maintains that this has resulted in the general failure of women to assume proper human dignity. Free and independent being when compared to men on a plane of intellectual, economic and professional equality, a condition that not only has limited their achievement in many fields, but has also given rise to pervasive social evils and a particularly vitiating effect on the sexual relation between man and woman. *The Second Sex* revolves around “the idea that woman has been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to man through her relegation to being man's "Other.”<sup>68</sup> In agreement with the Hegelian idea of master-slave dialectics and Sartrean postulation that existence precedes essence, Beauvoir posits that the self needs otherness in order to define itself as a subject; the category of the otherness, therefore, is necessary in the constitution of the self as a self. Beauvoir discovers that woman is consistently defined as the ‘Other’ by man who takes on the role of the Self. As Beauvoir explains in her Introduction, woman is “the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. Man is the Subject, he is the Absolute- woman is the Other.”<sup>68</sup> Further, she maintains that human existence is an ambiguous interplay between transcendence and immanence, For her, man have been privileged with expressing transcendence through projects, whereas woman is forced into the repetitive and uncreative life of immanence. Hence, she proposes to

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investigate how this radically unequal relationship emerged as well as what structures, attitudes and presuppositions continue to maintain its social power.

De Beauvoir divided her thesis in *The Second Sex* into two major parts. The first part argues on the "Facts and Myths"<sup>68</sup> about women from multiple perspectives such as the biological-scientific, psychoanalytic, materialistic, historical, literary and anthropological. In each of these treatments, Beauvoir is careful to claim that none of them is sufficient to explain woman's definition as man's 'Other' or her consequent oppression. However, each of them contributes to woman's overall situation as the 'Other' sex. For example, in her discussion of biology and history, she notes that the women experience certain phenomena such as pregnancy, lactation, and menstruation that are foreign to men's experience and these contribute to a marked difference in women's situation. However, these physiological occurrences in no way directly cause woman to be man's subordinate because biology and history are not mere facts of an unbiased observer, but are always incorporated into and interpreted from a situation. In addition, she acknowledges that psychoanalysis and historical materialism contribute tremendous insights into the sexual, familial and material life of woman, but fail to account for the whole picture. In the case of psychoanalysis, it denies the reality of choice, and in the case of historical materialism, it neglects to take into account the

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existential importance of the phenomena it reduces to material conditions. Beauvoir argued the way in which the preceding analyses like biological, historical, psychoanalysis and religion have contributed to the formulation of the myth of the eternal Feminine. This paradigmatic myth, which incorporates multiple myths of woman under it such as the myth of the mother, the virgin, the motherland, nature, and so on attempts to trap woman into an impossible ideal by denying the individuality and situation of all different kinds of women. In fact, the ideal set by the eternal feminine sets up an impossible expectation because the various manifestations of the myth of femininity appear as contradictory and doubled. For example, history shows us that for as many representations of the mother as the respected guardian of life, there are as many depictions of her as the hated harbinger of death. The contradiction that man feels at having been born and having to die gets projected onto the mother who takes the blame for both. Thus, woman as mother is both hated and loved, and individual mothers are hopelessly caught in the contradiction. This doubled and contradictory operation appears in all feminine myths, thus forcing women to unfairly take the burden and blame for existence.

In the second part of the work, *The Second Sex* begins with her most famous assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."<sup>68</sup> This showcases that a



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woman is not just being a female but what woman defines herself to be. By this, De Beauvoir destroys the essentialism which claims that women are born feminine, according to whatever the culture and time define it to be. This, to her, is rather constructed to be such through social indoctrination. Beauvoir discusses the education of woman from her childhood, through her adolescence and finally to her experiences of lesbianism and sexual initiation. At each stage of human development, Beauvoir describes how women are forced to relinquish their claims to transcendence and authentic subjectivity by a progressively more stringent acceptance of the passive and alienated role to man's active and subjective demands. Woman's passivity and alienation are then explored in what Beauvoir entitles her "Situation" and her "Justifications."<sup>68</sup> Beauvoir posits the roles of wife, mother, and prostitute to show how women, instead of transcending through work and creativity, are forced into monotonous existences of having children, tending house and being the sexual receptacles of the male libido. Because she maintains the existentialist belief in the absolute ontological freedom of each existence regardless of sex (male or female), Beauvoir never claims that man has succeeded in destroying woman's freedom or in actually turning her into an object in relation to his subjectivity. She remains a transcendent freedom despite her objectification,

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alienation and oppression. Thus, *The Second Sex* always maintains its fundamental existentialist belief that each individual, regardless of sex, class or age, should be encouraged to define herself and to take on the individual responsibility that comes with freedom. This requires not just focusing on universal institutions, but on the situated individual existence struggling within the ambiguity of existence. However, *The Second Sex* was so controversial that the Vatican puts it along with her work, *The Mandarins* on the Index of prohibited books. But, even at this, *The Second Sex* remains, to this day, one of the foundational work in philosophy, feminism, and women's studies. *The* work heralded a feminist revolution and remains a central work in the investigation of women's oppression and liberation.

*The Second Sex* is Beauvoir's realization that her life had been affected in countless ways by her having been born a girl. The writing of *The Second Sex* thus coincided with her discovery of America and with her passionate affair with Algren. It also coincided with Sartre's transatlantic affair with the New York-based French journalist woman, Dolorès Vanetti who advice her to stand by her man rather than misbehaving with Nelson ALgren, having sex with teens and her dangerous liaisons , which caused Beauvoir much pain, and this personal experience made her to investigate the situation of women beyond doubt.

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According to Judith Okely, "Beauvoir uses herself as a case study' in *The Second Sex* to bring to light the situation of women in the world at large."<sup>68</sup> In the *Second Sex*, Beauvoir formulates various principles and applies them to women's situation in the universe. The first principle argues that man is the Subject, he is the 'Absolute' while woman is the 'Other'. Man incarnates humanity; woman by virtue of being female, deviates from the human norm. The consequence is that women constantly experience painful conflict between their humanity and their femininity.

For her, freedom not happiness, must be used as benchmark for measuring or assessing the situation of women. Beauvoir assumes that woman is a free conscious being like man. And in so far as the status of 'Other' is imposed on her, her situation is unjust and oppressive. But with freedom, comes responsibility when women consent to their own oppression and help to oppress other women, they are to blame. The introductory quotation at the beginning of the second session of *the Second Sex* is like a line from Sartre's 1948 play, *Dirty Hands*. But Beauvoir's true measure is that concrete freedom, institutions, and practices are to be judged from the point of view of the concrete opportunities they offer the individual. She argues that abstract equality must be observed not just the right to

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vote, for it is not enough to turn freedom into reality, women must also have the right for a good health, education and money. They need to make use of their rights because political independence without economic independence is useless.

Again, she asserted the principle that “one is not born woman but becomes woman.”<sup>68</sup> She opines that women are not born but made, that every society has constructed a vast material, cultural and ideological mechanism or system dedicated to the fabrication of femininity. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir attacks ‘femininity’ in the sense of patriarchal or normative femininity. For her, a “feminine woman is one who accepts herself as ‘Other’; ‘femininity’ is the badge of the unfree. For women to be free, ‘femininity’ must disappear”.<sup>68</sup> Hence, Beauvoir’s insights have served as the foundation of modern feminism. All contemporary feminists build on Beauvoir’s achievement. Responding to this, Albert Camus accuses her of having made "the French male look ridiculous."<sup>68</sup> In the 1970s, Beauvoir’s work became controversial in new ways. The Second-wave feminists were interested in building a strong sense of female identity, committed to valuing women’s traditional activities and to various theories of female difference took Beauvoir’s critique of patriarchal femininity to be an expression of her hostility to women. Beauvoir’s existentialism is incompatible with identity

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theory. Some scholars disliked Beauvoir's emphasis on freedom, her claim that femininity is a form of ideological oppression, and her doggedness that women are too happy to co-operate in their own oppression.

### **3.5 De Beauvoir's Idea of Woman**

In 1946, when Simone de Beauvoir began to write her landmark study of women, *The Second Sex*, legislation allowing French women to vote was little more than a year old. Birth control would be legally denied them until 1967. Like in Switzerland, women would not be enfranchised until 1971. Such repressive circumstances accounted for both the fierce, often wrathful urgency of Beauvoir's work and the vehement controversies this founding text of feminism aroused when it was first published in France in 1949 and in the United States in 1953; and as we stated earlier, the Vatican placed it on the Index of Forbidden Books. For the psychiatrist Karl Menninger, the work is "pretentious" and "tiresome,"<sup>68</sup>; a reviewer in *The Atlantic Monthly* faulted it for being "bespattered with the repulsive lingo of existentialism."<sup>68</sup> Beauvoir wrote at a time when uncertainty about gender roles had been rising to the surface in society. These anxieties were detectable in the shifts in tone of women's magazines. *The Second Sex* was first published in France in 1949, and took French society by storm. 'Unsatisfied, frigid,

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nymphomaniac, lesbian, a hundred times aborted, Simone de Beauvoir reflected on the notions of femininity, sex and gender.

De Beauvoir defines women as the “Second Sex” because women are defined such in relation to men. Aristotle referred that women are female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities. De Beauvoir also points out that St. Thomas referred to the woman as the imperfect man, the incidental being. De Beauvoir asserted that "women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves, moving beyond the immanence to which they were previously resigned and reaching transcendence",<sup>68</sup> a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world where one chooses one's freedom. She argued that men had made women the "Other" in society by application of a false aura of "mystery" around them and used this as an excuse not to understand women or their problems and not to help them. She also understands that this stereotyping was always done in societies by the group higher in the hierarchy to the group lower in the hierarchy. She wrote that a similar kind of oppression by hierarchy also happened in other categories of identity, such as race, class and religion, but she maintained that it was nowhere more truly than with gender in which men stereotyped women and used it as an excuse to organize male society. De Beauvoir argued that women have historically been considered deviant,

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abnormal. She said that even Mary Wollstonecraft considered men to be "the ideal towards which women should aspire"<sup>68</sup> She maintained that this attitude limited women's success by maintaining the perception that they were a deviation from the normal, and were always outsiders attempting to emulate normality. Further, De Beauvoir states that woman is a female to the extent that she defines herself as such. For her, biology only describes the existence of sexual difference between male and female for the function of reproduction. They can be defined only correlatively but their differences are not parallel as she writes;

In actuality, the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles. Man represents both the positive and neutral while female represents only the negative defined by limiting criteria without reciprocity. Man is used to indicate or designate human being in general.<sup>68</sup>

She argues that it is not the biological features or nature that defines a woman rather, one is not born woman but rather becomes a woman. It is she who defines herself by dealing with the nature on her own account in her emotional life; she states that every female human being is not necessary a woman. For one to be a

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woman, the individual must share in that mysterious threatened reality known as feminism. The work was translated by the biologist H. M Parsley in America in

1953 and released in England and America in that year. It contained probably the most famous of Beauvoir's statements: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."<sup>68</sup> As a consequence of its challenges to biological determinism, the treatise ushered in unprecedented levels of open debate about 'fixed' feminine characteristics, preparing the way for 'second wave' feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Parsley's version has been criticized for over half a century because he cut about 100 pages and lost much of the existential philosophical implications of her analysis. It was only at the end of 2009 that *The Second Sex* received a new translation by Constance Border and Shella Malovany. This version has come at a time of a new wave of feminism in Britain and America. So it's an opportune moment to re-evaluate the importance of the 1950s women and Beauvoir in the development of modern feminism, bringing into relief the relevance of *'The Second Sex'* in women's liberation up to the present day. They were in a stronger position than their grandmothers had been in a difficult situation as women. The daughters of this generation grew up in a time of relative stability and prosperity. Economically, in olden day they were often dependent on their husbands. For



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example, women could not obtain loans in their own names and most did not have their own income. Simone de Beauvoir's work '*The Second Sex*' looks like the

Feminine mystique that saw women's oppression as a result of society rather than unjust laws. De Beauvoir used existential, phenomenological and Marxist ideas to develop her theory on woman. She argued that woman had been socially constructed as the absolute other to man's role as transcendent being. Woman had been the object in history where man had been subject. She encouraged women to become conscious that their roles in society had been constructed by patriarchy. She put the blame for female subjugation on women and men who, by not challenging the patriarchal ideology of oppression, had authentically collaborated with it. In Sartrean terms, Beauvoir depicted female beliefs of their subjection to men as natural as bad faith ultimately, a denial of their power to transcend it and exert their freedom. Women became strongly aware of lingering inequalities. Men expected women's involvement in the peace movement to consist largely of providing them with dinners, cups of tea, audiences and sexual companionship. But women, influenced by the changes were no longer content with these roles. In the early 1970s, when anti-war activism was high, Australian women decided to follow their American counterparts and form their own movement based on the

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liberation of women from the constraints of a male dominated society. Beauvoir underlined the tragic

ambiguity of women's position in modern society. They were increasingly working part-time and attending university, thereby beginning to see themselves as deserving of equal professional opportunities as men and as being mentally as capable. These ambitions clashed with society's demands on women to nurture and care for their children and husbands. Throughout the 1950s, dissatisfaction among housewives became a recurring theme in the women's press. They often described their housework as mundane, their husbands ungrateful, and the agony aunt columns were saturated with discussion of what by 1954 was being labeled "suburban neurosis."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Woman started to question the value of their existence as child bearers and careers. Hence, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* clearly and philosophically articulated some answers to these questions. It helped woman to resolve her doubts most authentically because the doubts that women have about themselves are man-made, and most women are so enslaved to the myths of their own inferiority, that they are unable to see the truth beside the myths. In Simone De Beauvoir's distinguished book, women now have, for the first time, the facts set before them which can free them from the tyranny of these debasing myths. *The*

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*Second Sex* had the potential to shatter woman's previously misguided self-perception and to cause a revolution in female consciousness. *The Second Sex* exposes the women condition and develop a legal changes that attempt to put into

practice the theory that women are equal to men, and values embedded in female and male psyches that continue to fuel the objectification of woman. Beauvoir wrote directly and clearly of the complex network of assumptions about woman that had led to her oppression for centuries. Her philosophy of woman as the 'Other' is particularly resonant today. Beauvoir explained that the construction of woman as an object of sexual desire epitomized the power imbalance in society between men and women. This power difference or imbalance is still at work in our psychological processes. It is an inequality that is exploited and perpetuated by the media. As Catherine Redfern, co-author of *Reclaiming the F-Word*, has argued, "the cultural representation of women is one of the new battlegrounds for feminist activists and this fight will only be over when social attitudes, and their internalization by men and women, have been changed."<sup>68</sup>

### **3.5.1 Immanence**

The concept of immanence was first established in the work of the medieval scholastics named Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. Drawing on Aristotle's

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distinction between acting and creating, these thinkers conceived that "God and His effect work" is identical with His Being"<sup>68</sup> as an immanent activity; an activity that is limited, however, to the activity of understanding. According to *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Immanence, is defined as "presence in the world... in pantheism is thought of as uniform, God ... equally present in the personal and the impersonal, in the evil and the good."<sup>68</sup> In theism, "immanence occurs in various degrees, more in the personal than the impersonal, in the good than in the evil."<sup>68</sup> Immanence refers to those philosophical and metaphysical theories of divine presence in which the divine encompasses, or is manifested in the material world. It is often contrasted with theories of transcendence, in which the divine is seen to be outside the material world. Immanence is not oriented against a divine transcendent position, but is conceived as a form of manifestation not in the sense of worldly expression, but in the sense of a spiritual being-with itself. Further, the word was developed in the works of Spinoza, for whom substance becomes the immanent cause of all things. It is also referred to as being-in itself, which has no life, no existence. It is a degradation of existence. It is a being that is incapable of realizing itself, a non-conscious thing that possesses essence with independent existence and constitute all the things in the world. Hence, De Beauvoir referred to woman as being in the state of pure

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immanence and facticity. The woman's situation is compared to that of Negroes as she writes:

There are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former master class wishes to keep them in place –that is the place chosen for them. In both cases the former masters lavish more or less sincere eulogies, either on the virtues of the good negro with his dormant, childish, merry, soul, -the submissive negro –or on the merits of the woman who is truly feminine –that is frivolous, infantile, irresponsible the submissive.<sup>68</sup>

Sequel to this, the woman is immanence. They are non-conscious things that possess essence with independent existence. In other words, they are opposed to men who are transcendence, thus, consciousness marks boundary between immanence and transcendence. The division of sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history. Woman has always been socially constructed, insists De Beauvoir.

### **3.5.2 Transcendence**

According to *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, to transcend is to "ascend beyond, excel." The term is used of the "relation of God to

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the universe of physical things and finite spirits, as being ... in essential nature, prior to it, exalted above it, and having real being apart from it."<sup>68</sup> In everyday language, "transcendence" means "going beyond", and "self-transcendence" means going beyond a prior form or state of oneself. Mystical experience is thought of as a particularly advanced state of self-transcendence, in which the sense of a separate self is abandoned. Dean Hamer, described in the book, *The God Gene that "Self-transcendence* is believed to be psychometrically measurable, and (at least partially) inherited, and has been incorporated as a personality dimension in the Temperament and Character Inventory."<sup>68</sup> although this has been criticized by scholar such as Carl Zimmer. Jean-Paul Sartre also speaks of transcendence in his works. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre utilizes transcendence to describe the relation of the self to the object oriented world, as well as our concrete relations with others. For Sartre, "the being-for-itself"<sup>68</sup> is sometimes called transcendence. Additionally, if the other is viewed strictly as an object, much like any other object, then the other is, for the being- for-itself, a transcendence-transcended. When the being-for-itself grasps the other in the others world, and grasps the subjectivity that the other has, it is referred to as transcending-transcendence. Thus, Sartre defines relations with others in terms of "transcendence"<sup>68</sup> Human existence is described by transcendence, that is, by the possibility of choosing one's own good and

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project. De Beauvoir develops the concept of freedom as “transcendence meaning movement towards indeterminate possibilities and future.”<sup>68</sup> Further, transcendence means passing beyond human limit, and independent of the material universe. The term can also be referred to as the capacity of human being to change circumstances through self-initiated action. Man is upheld as having transcendence, the ability to strive for and achieve change. Man is pure transcendence, the essential and sovereign, while woman is referred to as immanence, inessential and the other. Transcendence is also referred as “being-for-itself, which is continually active, trying to escape from itself. It expresses its life principle by carving out of the being-in –itself all the multiple living and non-living experience of the world.”<sup>68</sup> Hence this shows that consciousness marks the boundary between immanence and transcendence, and also creates difference in other things.

### **3.5.3 Today’s Woman**

The women today are in fair way better than the olden days’ women. They move to dethrone the myth of femininity. They are beginning to affirm their independence and essentiality in concrete ways. But they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. According to Beauvoir in the reared feminine world their desire and normal destiny is marriage which is a practical subordination to men; for masculine prestige is far from extinction resting still

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upon solid economic, political and social foundations. Simone de Beauvoir revealed herself as a woman of formidable courage and integrity, whose life supported her thesis: the basic options of an individual must be made on the

premises of an equal vocation for man and woman founded on a common structure of their being, independent of their sexuality .The problem that women face today is that they are expected to multi-task. They are expected to raise a family, look after kids, clean the house, and do all other odd jobs, and at the same time, they are expected to contribute to the family income. They even suffer emotionally as they have to leave their small kids at home, and stay out for long hours pursuing their careers and job. The pressure to cope up with all these roles can result in anxiety, ill-health and depression. However, with changing times, it is expected out of men to contribute and help the women, especially when they are married and looking after their kids and family. But sadly, in some places men are unsupportive and not bothered. They prefer doing what they feel or find best, and would not care for their wife or kids; leaving the poor woman to handle the affairs of the home alone. The changing role of Women today is mainly due to education, poverty, and the responsibility of her domestic household. More women are poor as compared to men. It is because of poverty and the awareness to be less dependent on the men



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that women have now started to move out, find a job, and earn for themselves and their family. Today in most countries women are as educated as men, so they feel they have a right to similar jobs and attain the same levels as men. This has led them to move out and seek jobs, just like, or even better than men. Initially men objected to women going out and working or pursuing their career outside home. They still do at some places. However, with the growing needs and less of money, they had no way other than to consent and attuned. Most women have started working. That is because their husbands cannot or do not work anymore, or because they are widows and separated. Also, because she wants to contribute and earn as her husband's income is not enough to support the family. Based on this, I am a woman; I must make every good effort to succeed. If I fail, no one will say, she does not have what it takes. They will say, Women do not have what it takes. However, that is what makes me proud to be a woman in that I am capable of doing everything that can make me succeed as a human person and I am happy being a woman. Today, men cheer every woman of substance not idle ones and equally need to consider women as equal being where equity, justice and opportunity should be given to women so as to contribute to the nation building. Women tend to liberate themselves from mental, social political, economic, and academic slumber through men's cordial relationship.

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#### **3.5.4. Distinction between Gender and Sex in Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex***

Although some scholars disagree with De Beauvoir's distinction of sex and gender, De Beauvoir upheld that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"<sup>68</sup>. This construction separates sex from gender and proposes that gender is an attribute of identity progressively attained. The feminists has maintained that anatomy is destiny; sex is comprehend to be the invariant, instinctively different, and tactic attribute of the female body, while gender is the traditional meaning and system that body developed or learned, the variable modes of that body's acculturation.

Gender is a social construct that refers to the ways of seeing and representing people and situations based on sex difference. Gender, in the post-modern context, is a cultural category influenced by stereotypes of male and female behavior patterns that exist in the ideas and principles which are often traditionally constructed. The sexes are attributed to a particular historical and sociological identity which appear to be usual and innate and cannot be interchanged; although the male and female are distinct, they supplement themselves completely without a glitch. The historical explanations of gender are institutionalized and made to

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appear permanent, to justify the power and authority which men enjoy at the expense of women. This power and authority exist at several levels like the economic, sexual, social and psychic. Gender issues includes circumstances like lack of schooling, low economic status, home and public responsibilities, violence in marriage, and the conflict between nurturing roles such as motherhood, domestic work and other specific areas of creative work. The study of the relationship between gender and sex refers to the study of men and women within the background of customs. In the world , functions and duties are subjected to the gendered division of labour; men exercise the instrumental functions and women perform the expressive functions of the society. Hence, gender can be considered in sexual stereotypes and in power relations between individuals and groups.

The work, *Second Sex* represents women as the issues of argument. It emphasizes on the significance of gender issues in history, politics, religion and culture. It also examines the relationships between men and women and the consequences of power differentials for the economic, social and cultural status of men and women in different locations and periods of history. Norms of control lie at the very core of practices of gender. This system of norms, structures and individual performances of norms together create a social order recognized as patriarchal. *The Second Sex* seeks the liberation of women from sexist oppression.

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It opposes any ideology, institution, philosophy, or people seeking to discriminate against women. It interrogates structures of patriarchy in order to establish for women the same rights that are granted to men. Rooted in women's social vision and struggle for liberation from gender oppression, *The Second Sex* has emerged out of a response for gender equity. This response is an indignant reaction to patriarchy, its attendant notion of deference to males, its disparaging of women's culture and the use of gender as a factor in the equation for social justice. It has developed as an oppositional practice to patriarchy.

With the distinction in one piece, it is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity, and neither can one refer meaningfully to natural or unnatural gendered behavior: all gender is, by definition, unnatural. Moreover, if the distinction is consistently applied, it becomes unclear whether being a given sex has any necessary consequence for becoming a given gender. The presumption of a causal or mimetic relation between sex and gender is undermined. If being a woman is one cultural interpretation of being female and if that interpretation is in no way necessitated by being female, then it appears that the female body is the arbitrary locus of the gender 'woman',

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and there is no reason to preclude the possibility of that body becoming the locus of other constructions of gender. At its limit, then, Judith upheld that "the sex and

gender distinction implies a radical heteronomy of natural bodies and constructed genders with the consequence that 'being' female and 'being' a woman are two very different sorts of being"<sup>68</sup>. This assertion follows Simone de Beauvoir's expression that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"

For her, the term female designates a fixed and self-identical set of natural corporeal facts, a presumption which is seriously challenged by the continuum of chromosomal variations, and the term woman designates a variety of modes through which those facts acquire cultural meaning. One is female, then, to the extent that the copula asserts a fixed and self-identical relation, that is, one is female and therefore not some other sex. Immeasurably more difficult, however, is the claim that one is a woman in the same sense. If gender is the variable cultural interpretation of sex, then it lacks the fixity and closure characteristic of simple identity. To be a gender, whether man, woman, is to be engaged in an ongoing cultural interpretation of bodies and, hence, to be dynamically positioned within a field of cultural possibilities. Gender must be understood as a modality of taking

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on or realizing possibilities, a process of interpreting the body, giving it cultural form. In other words, to be a woman is to become a woman; it is not a matter of

acquiescing to a fixed ontological status, in which case one could be born a woman, but, rather, an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities. For Simone de Beauvoir, it seems, the verb "become" contains a consequential ambiguity. Gender is not only a cultural construction imposed upon identity, but in some sense gender is a process of constructing ourselves. To become a woman is a purposive and appropriative set of acts, the acquisition of a skill, a task, to use Sartrean terms, to assume a certain corporeal style and significance. When 'become' is taken to mean purposefully assume or embody, it seems that Simone de Beauvoir is appealing to a voluntaristic account of gender. If genders are in some sense chosen, then what do we make of gender as a received cultural construction? It is usual these days to conceive of gender as passively determined, constructed by a personified system of patriarchy which precedes and determines the subject itself. Even if gender is rightly understood to be constructed by such systems, it remains necessary to ask after the specific mechanism of this construction. Does this system unilaterally inscribe gender upon the body, in which case the body would be a purely passive

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medium and the subject, utterly subjected? How, then, would one account for the various ways in which gender is individually reproduced and reconstituted? What is the role of personal agency in the reproduction of gender? In this perspective,

Simone de Beauvoir's expression might be understood to contain the various set of challenges to gender theory: to what extent is the "construction of gender a self-reflexive process? Simone de Beauvoir's account of 'becoming' a gender reconciles the internal ambiguity of gender as both project and construct."<sup>68</sup> When 'becoming' a gender is understood to be both choice and acculturation, then the usually oppositional relation between these terms is undermined. In keeping "become" ambiguous, Beauvoir formulates gender as a corporeal locus of cultural possibilities both received and innovated. Her theory of gender, then, entails a reinterpretation of the existential doctrine of choice whereby 'choosing' a gender is understood as the embodiment of possibilities within a network of deeply entrenched cultural norms.

### **3.5.5 Gender as Optional**

One chooses one's gender, but one does not choose it from a distance which signals an ontological juncture between the choosing agent and the chosen gender.

Simone de Beauvoir's view of gender as an incessant project, a daily act of

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reconstitution and interpretation, draws upon Sartre's doctrine of pre-reflective choice, and gives that difficult epistemological structure a concrete cultural meaning. Pre-reflective choice is a tacit and spontaneous act which Sartre terms

"quasi knowledge." Not wholly conscious, but nevertheless accessible to consciousness, it is the kind of choice we make and only later realize we have made. Simone de Beauvoir seems to rely on this notion of choice in referring to the kind of volitional act through which gender is assumed. Taking on a gender is not possible at a moment's notice, but is a subtle and strategic project which only rarely becomes manifest to a reflective understanding. Becoming a gender is an impulsive yet mindful process of interpreting a cultural reality laden with sanctions, taboos, and prescriptions. The choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear one's body a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles. To choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organizes them anew. Rather than a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew one's cultural history in one's own terms. This is not a prescriptive task we must endeavor to do, but one in which we have been endeavoring all along.



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The predominance of an existential framework has been criticized by Michele Le Doeuff and others for resurrecting "a classical form of voluntarism"<sup>68</sup> which insidiously blames the victims of oppression for 'choosing' their situation. When the doctrine of existential choice is used in this context, it is assuredly insidious, but this usage is itself a misuse which diverts attention from the empowering possibilities of position. The phenomenology of victimization that Simone de Beauvoir elaborates throughout 'The Second Sex' reveals that oppression, despite the appearance and weight of inevitability, is essentially contingent. Moreover, it takes out of the sphere of rectification, the discourse of oppressor and oppressed, reminding us that oppressive gender norms persist only to the extent that human beings take them up and give them life again and again. Simone de Beauvoir is not saying, however, that oppression is generated through a series of human choices. Her own efforts in anthropology and history underscores her awareness that oppressive systems have complicated material origins. The point is rather that these systems persist only to the extent that gender norms are tacitly, yet insistently taken up in the present through individual strategies which remain more or less disguised. Over and against a less sophisticated view of 'socialization', she is using the existential apparatus to understand the moment of appropriation through which socialization occurs. Through this emphasis on appropriation, she is providing an alternative to paternalistic explanatory models of acculturation which treat human

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beings only as products of prior causes, culturally determined in a strict sense, and which, consequently, leave no room for the transformative possibilities of personal

agency. By scrutinizing the mechanism of agency and appropriation, Beauvoir is attempting, The study tends to infuse the analysis with emancipator potential. Oppression is not a self-contained system which either confronts individuals as a theoretical object or generates them as its cultural pawns. It is a dialectical force which requires individual participation on a large scale in order to maintain its malignant life. Simone de Beauvoir does not directly address the burden of freedom that gender presents, but we can extrapolate from her view how constraining norms work to subdue the exercise of gender freedom. The social constraints upon gender compliance and deviation are so great that most people feel deeply wounded if they are told that they are not really manly or womanly, that they have failed to execute their manhood or womanhood properly. Indeed, insofar as social existence requires an unambiguous gender affinity, it is not possible to exist in a socially meaningful sense outside of established gender norms. The fall from established gender boundaries initiates a sense of radical dislocation which can assume a metaphysical significance. If existence is always gender existence, then ,to stray outside of established gender is in some sense to

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put one's very existence into question. In these moments of gender dislocation in which we realize that it is hardly necessary that we are the genders we have become, we confront the burden of choice intrinsic to living as a man or a woman or as some other gender identity, a freedom made burdensome through social constraint. The anguish and terror of leaving a prescribed gender or of trespassing upon another gender territory testifies to the social constraints upon gender interpretation as well as to the necessity that there be an interpretation, that is, to the essential freedom at the origin of gender. Similarly, the widespread difficulty in accepting motherhood, for instance, as an institutional rather than an instinctual reality expresses this same interplay of constraint and freedom. Simone de Beauvoir's view of the maternal instinct as a cultural fiction often meets with the argument that a desire so commonly and so compellingly felt ought for that very reason to be considered organic and universal. This response seeks to universalize a cultural option, to claim that it is not one's choice but the result of an organic necessity to which one is subject. In the effort to naturalize and universalize the institution of motherhood, it seems that the optional character of motherhood is being denied; in effect, motherhood is actually being promoted as the only option, that is a compulsory social institution. The desire to interpret maternal feelings as organic necessities discloses a deeper desire to disguise the choice one is making. If motherhood becomes a choice, then what else is possible? This kind of

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questioning often engenders vertigo and terror over the possibility of losing social sanctions of leaving a solid social station and place. That this terror is so well known gives perhaps the most credence to the notion that gender identity rests on the unstable bedrock of human invention.

Simone de Beauvoir accepts a gender-free model of freedom as the normative ideal for women's aspirations. It seems that Beauvoir prescribes the overcoming of gender altogether, especially for women, for whom becoming one's gender implies the sacrifice of autonomy and the capacity for transcendence. Thus, on the other hand, Butler maintained that in so far as transcendence appears particularly masculine project, her prescription seems to urge women to assume the model of freedom currently embodied by the masculine gender. In other words, because women have been identified with their anatomy, and this identification has served the purposes of their oppression, they ought now to identify with consciousness, that transcending activity unrestrained by the body. If this were her view, then for her, De Beauvoir would be offering women a chance to be men, and promoting the prescription that the model of freedom currently regulating masculine behavior ought to become the model after which women fashion themselves. And yet, Simone de Beauvoir seems to be saying much more than either of the above alternatives suggested. Not only is it questionable whether she accepts a view of

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consciousness or freedom which is in any sense beyond the body but her discussion of the 'Other' permits masculine project of disembodiment. Again ,if one reads her discussion of Self' and 'Other' it looks as a reworking of Hegel's

dialectic of master and slave. For Simone de Beauvoir, the masculine project of disembodiment is self-deluding and unsatisfactory. The self-asserting 'man' whose self-definition requires a hierarchical contrast with an "Other" does not provide a model of true autonomy, for she points out the bad faith of his designs, that is ,the "Other" is, in every case, his own alienated self. This Hegelian truth, which she appropriates through a Sartrian filter, establishes the essential interdependence of the disembodied 'man' and the corporeally determined 'woman'. His disembodiment is only possible on the condition that women occupy their bodies as their essential and enslaving identities. If women are their bodies which is not the same as 'existing' their bodies which implies living one's body as a project and bearer of created meanings, if women are only their bodies, if their consciousness and freedom are only so many disguised permutations of bodily need and necessity, then women have, in effect, exclusively monopolized the bodily sphere. By defining women as "Other", men' are able through the shortcut of definition to dispose of their bodies, to make themselves other than their bodies, and to make

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their bodies other than themselves. This Cartesian 'man' is not the same as the man with distinct anatomical traits, and in so far as a 'man' is his anatomical traits, he seems to be participating in a distinctively feminine sphere. The embodied aspect of his existence is not really his own, and hence, he is not really a sex, but beyond sex. This sex which is beyond sex must initiate a splitting and social projection in order not to know his own contradictory identity. The projection of the body as "Other" proceeds according to a peculiar rationality which relies more on associative beliefs and conclusions which defy the laws of commutability than on sound reasoning. The disembodied man identifies himself with a non-corporeal reality, that is the soul, consciousness, transcendence, and from this point on his body becomes 'Other'. In so far as he inhabits that body, convinced all the while that he is not the body which he inhabits, his body must appear to him as strange, as alien, as an alienated body, a body that is not his. From this belief that the body is 'Other', it is not a far leap to the conclusion that others are their bodies, while the masculine is a non-corporeal phenomenon. The body rendered as "Other", the body denied and, then, projected, re-emerges for the man as the view of 'Others' as essentially body. Hence, women become the "Other;" they come to embody corporeality itself. This redundancy becomes their essence, and existence as a woman becomes what Hegel termed "a motionless tautology."<sup>68</sup> Simone de

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Beauvoir's use of the Hegelian dialectic of self and "Other" argues the limits of a Cartesian version of disembodied freedom and implicitly criticizes the model of autonomy upheld by masculine gender norms. The masculine pursuit of disembodiment is necessarily deceived, because the body can never really be denied; its denial becomes the condition for its re-emergence in alien form. Disembodiment becomes a way of living or existing' the body in the mode of denial. And the denial of the body, as in Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, reveals itself as nothing other than the embodiment of denial.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### HINDRANCES TO WOMAN LIBERATION

De Beauvoir discussed many ways that hinder women from attaining or defining themselves as part of the human species. Such hindrances or factors include culture or orientation factor, family factor, religious factor, patriarchal factor, marriage and reproduction factor, societal factor, dependence or idleness, etc.

#### 4.1 Culture or Orientation Factor

The concept of culture seems to be an intractable word which appears difficult to define because it embraces tangible and non- tangible aspect of reality in all human societies. However, culture is seen generally as shared belief and values of group such as the belief, customs, practices, and social behavior of particular nation or people. The word culture emanates from the Latin word “*cotere*”<sup>68</sup> which means to till the ground; to cultivate. According to Lapierre, culture is “the heritage of wisdom, or more properly, the totality of inventions and discoveries, that is added to and passed on by each, successive generation”<sup>68</sup> He enumerates the elements and shared values that make up a total culture as against what is referred to as basic culture. Culture consists of skills whereby tools are made and used. It also comprises of human relationship and symbolic devices, such as words, concepts, and appropriate motivations, sentiments, values, and other human attributes which

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result in the use of such skills and patterns. Salzmann in *Kpim of Feminism*, refers to culture as “the whole of mankind learned behavior. It include its meaning, how people act, what they say and think, and everything they make either with their hands or means of their machinery.”<sup>68</sup> Culture often takes on a sociological and ethnological sense. It is in this sense that people may discuss plurality of culture like feminism, sexism, ethnicism. Culture embodies forms of articulated male and female differences and similarities attached with roles and behavior appropriate for a population group. Again, Ogunyemi, P.I . in his work "Africa culture and democracy argues that culture gives identity to different human group."<sup>68</sup>As a result, it is common for people to have a cultural identity. Culture helps its owners to do things specific to them with meaning and fulfillment such as separating rights and wrong, rewarding and punishing, values and non-value things in view of the society's code of appropriate and inappropriate things, values and patterns. Feminism as a code of culture does the identifying lifestyle and roles which are regarded as sexist discrimination and human. De Beauvoir sees culture as one of the instruments of oppression, and a primary limiting factor to women liberation.

According to her:

The oppression of women has the family and patrimony/ custom as its causes “There are different customs which existed from the classical antiquity: Arabian, Hebrew/ Jewish, Levities, Greek, Moslem where girls are drown into ditches

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as soon as they were born, put wholly at the man's mercy, reduced to a semi slave without the liberty of complaint and as well remain totally submerged and inferior to men respectively.<sup>68</sup>

Sequel to this, de Beauvoir argued that from infancy, there is no difference between the male and female, but that the boy or male is given the orientation or impression that he has an alter ego which makes him see himself as essential, superior, swollen with pride in his manhood, which is a symbol of autonomy, transcendence and power; whereas the female begins to feel inessential, inferior, frustrated and passive. By this, a vicious circle is formed; hence penis envy is manifested in diverse ways and different cases. In different cultures, the male and female are treated differently right from birth. In Igbo land, for instance, when a male child is born in a family, he is welcomed with a hen and some tubers of yam; whereas a new born female child is welcomed only with yams. Also in Islamic culture, females are also submerged and treated as inferior to their male counterparts. This factor was brought out clearly by C.C Mbaegbu and Stella Ukaolar in their work, 'An Appraisal of Women Slavery in the Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex', when they observed that "the situation of the female sex and her value compared to the male is like that of the slave's, compared with the free man's, hence masochistic."<sup>68</sup>

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Because of this, Simone de Beauvoir concludes that these expose the exploitation of women historically, and it needs to be changed. In her perception, a struggle for equal opportunity among the human species is not a matter of appeal to men to give women freedom, but a matter of women to identify themselves, rejecting bad faith and discovering their solidarity.

#### **4.2 Family Factor**

Family is the cradle of civil virtues." It comprises a group of people who are closely related by birth, marriage or adoption."<sup>68</sup> It means people living together and functioning as a single household, usually consisting of parents and their children. It also constitutes a single household and interacting with one another in their respective social positions, usually those of spouses, children and siblings. Historically in most cultures, according to de Beauvoir, the family was patriarchal as the male dominated; for instance, the families given in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, the male heads of the clans were allowed to have several wives as well as concubines. As a general rule, women had a rather low status. In Roman times, the family was still patriarchal, and in general, the status of women was somewhat improved over that suggested in the Hebrew Bible, although they were still not allowed to manage their own affairs. The Roman family was an extended one. The family as it existed in medieval Europe was male dominated and extended.

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In the West, industrialization and the accompanying urbanization spawned and continue to spawn many changes in family structure by causing a sharp change in life and occupational styles. Many people, particularly unmarried youths, left farms and went to urban centers to become industrial workers. This process led to the dissolution of many extended families. The modern family that emerged after the Industrial Revolution is different from the earlier model. For instance, patriarchal rule began to give way to greater equality between the sexes. Similarly, family roles once considered exclusively male or female broke down. Care for the home and children, once the exclusive duty of the female is often a shared activity, and as increasingly, is the earning of wages and the pursuit of public life, once the exclusive domain of the male. The structure of the family has also changed in that some couples choose not to marry legally, but instead, elect to have their children out of wedlock; many of these informal relationships tend to be of short duration, and have given rise to high level of divorce and rapid increase in the number of one-parent households. In Western cultures, most especially, the modern family is more of a consuming as opposed to a producing unit, and the members of the family work away from home rather than at home. Public authorities, primarily governmental ones, have assumed many of the functions that the family used to provide, such as caring for the aged and the sick, educating the young, and



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providing for recreation. Technological advancements have made it possible for couples to decide if and when they want to have children.

Based on these, Beauvoir argues that the family is also a hindrance to women self-identification and transcendence. She explains that right from antiquity, women have been inextricably, and tied to domestic work and this prevented them from taking part in being architects of their destiny. To her, reproduction cannot make women transcend their situation; rather, she is doomed to misery and death. For this reason she maintained that with “Contraceptives such as potion, suppositories and vaginal tampons and legal abortion, the pain of child birth as well as the painful burden of pregnancy: five minutes' pleasure: nine months' pain' will no longer limit the women from reproductive function and would also permit her to undertake her maternities in freedom.”<sup>68</sup> But how factual is this Beauvoir's position, for the family had performed valuable functions to its members. It provides emotional and psychological security, particularly through the warmth love, companionship that living together generates between spouses and their children. Family equally provides social and political function by providing guidelines for the regulation of sexual conduct and institutionalizing procreation. Further, family is economically beneficial to the spouses and the children, for it provides valuables like shelter, clothes, physical security, and equally promotes

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order and stability in the society at large. Family is also the primary school of citizenship because the qualities of a good citizen like obedience, cooperation, law-abiding, tolerance, self-sacrifice, patriotism, are learnt in the family coinciding with Abraham Lincoln's observation; "whatever I am and whatever I hope to be. I owe to my mother."<sup>68</sup>

### **4.3 Religious Factor**

Religion means "a fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a group of people. These set of beliefs concern the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, and involve devotional and ritual observances."<sup>68</sup> It is an institutionalized or personal system of belief and practices relating to the divine. It is also personal beliefs or values, a set of strongly held belief, values and attitudes that somebody lives by. Simone de Beauvoir's creed of religion is based on "individuality and responsibility."<sup>68</sup> Her emphasis is on human capacity to determine human destiny. She maintained that religion is irrelevant given that there are many alternative ways to finding meaning in various forms of cultural pursuits, ethical ideals and lifestyles. Beauvoir viewed religion as another instrument that hinders woman liberation and identity. She argued that religious ideals convey ideas that the women naturally are inferior without recognizing the olden mother goddess that was worshipped previously. Thus, Beauvoir opined that religious anti-

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feminism is similar to anti-sexuality. For her, religion maintained that the flesh is accursed; woman becomes the devil's most fearsome temptation.

She writes:

Since women remain always the other, it is not held that reciprocally, male and female are both the flesh that is for the Christian, the hostile other is precisely woman. In her, the Christian finds incarnated the temptation of the world and the devil. All the fathers of the church insist on the idea that she led Adam into sin.<sup>68</sup>

Further, Beauvoir maintained that in the hierarchy of Christianity, the church excluded women, and this exclusion inculcated feeling inferiority that can lead to psychological disorder. The issue of encouraging women mutilation is also a problem. Women are prevented from full personal development through genuine participation in the public affairs showing that they have not reached adulthood, a reason Joan Chittister likened woman's situation with that of Job. According to her; "it is Job, the innocent one whose suffering is not the plan or will of god. Today, Job is a woman. The voice of universal suffering fits female picture of all too perfectly."<sup>68</sup> De Beauvoir opined that religion is a caption that distracts women from seeking justice in the universe that is full of injustice. She argues that:

Woman is asked in the name of God to accept her inferiority as believed and thank him...she is equal of lordly male: even the temptation to revolt is

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suppressed by the claim that the injustice is overcome. Woman is no longer denied transcendence since she is to consecrate her immanence to God.<sup>68</sup>

In pursuance of this, she upheld that the equality obtained by women through religion is in-sustained and inadequate. For religion has given the women a new idea to accept that the men are superior to them. Based on this, Beauvoir states that religion gives the women pseudo-exaltation and this equality is not genuine because pseudo-equality is not equality in actuality but in eventuality.

#### **4.4 Patriarchal Factor**

This is another factor that is regarded as a means of hindrance to women liberation. Patriarchal is relating to or characteristics of a culture in which men are the most powerful member. De Beauvoir observes that patriarchy is another hindrance to the woman, hence oppressive towards women. In her words,

humanity is a male and male defines woman not in herself but as relative to him. Man can think of himself without woman, but woman cannot think of herself without man. She is simply what he decrees, thus she is sex, absolute sex, no less.<sup>68</sup>

She is defined and differentiated with reference to man, and not he with reference to her. In other words, she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. Men unquestionably occupy the most advantageous places, hold the most important posts in the public sphere. De Beauvoir further posits:

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Investigations make it clear that the majority of parents would rather have sons than daughters. Boys are spoken to with greater seriousness and esteem, they are granted more rights; they themselves treat girls scornfully. It is not the women but men who control the world through the discovery of the penis, and those women in most part of the world are still in a state of subjection.<sup>68</sup>

It follows that woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but as man defines her. She is therefore; what in- men's-eyes-she seems- to-be. De Beauvoir points out instance in the theological exposition of Western religion, where God the Father is a man, and Christ is also identified as a man with flesh and blood, the Angels are spirits and have no sex; but have masculine names and appear as good looking young men. One encounter this inextricable confusion between man and God in many devotees. The confessor in particular occupies an ambiguous place between earth and heaven. He listens with mortal ears when the penitent bares her soul, but his gaze envelops her in a supernatural light; he is a man of God, he is God incarnate in human form.

However, the exclusion of women from the hierarchy has psychological meaning, distinct from her exclusion from other authoritative groups, and the effects are to be seen in many pious women and alleged female mystics. De Beauvoir opines that in the middle Ages, men held unfavorable opinion of women but the writings

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of bourgeoisie inspiration attacked women with distortion, myths, humor, and places them with laziness, sport, filthiness and obscenity.

#### **4.5 Marriage Factor**

In *The Second Sex*, marriage, child care, and motherhood were also described by de Beauvoir as a hindrance to women self-development. For her, this is against feminist ideology, thus add to reduce women to the condition of inessentiality and burden in itself. She states that “it is very difficult for the women to differentiate their reproductive role from her productive labour”<sup>68</sup> Historically, she upheld that women are inextricably tied to domestic work and prevented from taking part in public affairs; being architects of their destiny and helping in the shaping of the world were her enslavement to the generative function. For her, marriage, reproduction cannot make women transcendent but immanent, but this cannot be factual because marriage is a natural contract between the man and the woman. It is a contract that originates from nature. It is a contract in which the two individuals surrender themselves to each other for the purpose of companionship, begetting and rearing children, and for mutual aid throughout their life. Hence, it is a natural institution.

According to Anojulu, “motherhood is a vocation not a profession. It is the state of being a mother; which means a female parent.”<sup>68</sup> The child is a gift from nature not a burden and needs love, security, care and life. The child is not for the parents but

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the parents are for the child in that he or she belongs to the nature. The nature has the first claim to all lives before parents. Therefore, woman was meant by nature to be a companion, procreator and a persuasive loving friend of the man.

#### **4.6 Societal Factor**

The word society describes a group of persons brought together in a relationship. It depicts a people gathered to achieve specified goals whether or not they share any form of resemblance in body. Maclver and Charles, defines the society as “a system of usages and procedures of authority and mutual aid, of many grouping and divisions of controls and human behavior and of liberties.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, it is the web of social relationship. Humans are social being and they express their nature by creating and recreating an organization which guides and control their behaviour in numerous ways. Hence, de Beauvoir argued that society is opposed to treating girls like boys as she is deprived of happy freedom. For her, the situation of the female sex and her value compared to the male is like that of the slave's, compared to the free man's, hence masochistic or humiliated and abused by others who feel sexually fulfilled. Thus, Beauvoir accepts that women exploitation is historical and therefore amenable to change. For this reason, her liberation must be the task to be done by women; it is not a matter of appeal to men to give them freedom but a matter of women discovering their identity, solidarity, having good faith of I can and rejecting bad faith. Women should rise above the common plane

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of giving their need a little more determination than the average. A man is a hero not because he is anyone else but because he is brave for ten minutes longer. Therefore, according to Mary Wollstonecraft, “the woman is free and everywhere in chain, but she will show her a way to liberation.”<sup>68</sup> This assertion of hers can be likened to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s observation that man is free but everywhere in chain; prompting the need for liberation.

#### **4.7 Dependence or Idleness Factor**

Idleness or Dependence is another hindrance to woman liberation. De Beauvoir views Idleness as oppression to women liberation movement. She succinctly explains:

A woman supported by a man in form of a wife or courtesan is not emancipated from the male because she has ballot in her hand... Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe, there is no longer a masculine mediator<sup>68</sup>

This showcases that when the woman is productive and active, she regains her transcendence; but if she is not active, she becomes immanence in her projects. She concretely affirms her status as in connection with the aims she pursues, with money and the rights she takes possession of, she makes trial of and senses her responsibility.



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## CHAPTER FIVE

### TRENDS OF FEMINISM

The trends of feminism is the chronological narrative of the movements and ideologies aimed at equal rights for woman. There are different trends of feminism such as First-wave feminism which began on 19th and early 20th centuries. It focuses on overturning legal inequalities, particularly women's suffrage. There is the Second-wave feminism which in 1960s to 1980s and was based on cultural inequalities, gender norms, and the role of women in society. Again, the trend has 'feminism 'which began in 1990s and 2000s and it is referred to as diverse strains of feminist activity, as a continuation of the second wave and a response to its perceived failure and the fourth wave of feminism of 2008 till date.

#### 5.1 First Trend of Feminism

This trend started in 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was the Age of Enlightenment which was characterized by secular intellectual reasoning and philosophical writing. It focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women, and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women and their children by their husbands. The Enlightenment philosophers defended the rights of women, for example, Jeremy Bentham in his work, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* said that, "It was the placing of women in a legally inferior position that made him chose the career of a reformist at the age of eleven."<sup>68</sup> Bentham spoke for complete

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equality between sexes including the rights to vote and to participate in government. He opposed the asymmetrical sexual moral standards between men and women. He condemned many countries common practice to deny women their rights due to allegedly inferior minds. Bentham gave many examples of able female regents. Again scholars like, Olympe de Gouges in her work *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* in 1791 advocated for the natural and political rights of women, Marquis de Condorcea advocated for women's suffrage. Mary Wollstonecraft in her work, "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" in 1792 identified "the education and upbringing of women as creating their limited expectations based on a self-image dictated by the typically male perspective."<sup>68</sup> Wollstonecraft argued that both genders contributed to inequality. She took women's considerable power over men for granted, and determined that both would require education to ensure the necessary changes in social attitudes. Other scholars of this trend include: Abigail Adams, Catharine Macaulay, and Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht. Thus, the first-wave feminism sought to argue for women's suffrage, female education rights, better working conditions, and abolition of gender double standards. It ended in 1920 with the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which granted women the right to vote in the United States. The first wave feminism is referred to as the women's

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suffrage movement. It aimed at extending the right of women to vote. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, a British woman named Mary Wollstonecraft in her work a “*Vindication of the Right of Woman*” upheld the feminist declaration of independence to mirror the work of Thomas Paine, *The Right of Man*. she took a controversial step for women liberation. Again, John Stuart Mill, in his work *The Subjugation of Women*, brought the idea of women’s suffrage into his election platform in 1865. Based on this, many men and women joined him to fight the same cause. The 19<sup>th</sup> century suffrage movement in the world carried out direct actions like setting up bombs, smashing windows in Britain during events and many other problems. During the First World War, there was a serious starting of able bodied men to go to war and women were required to take on many traditional male roles which led to a new view of what a women was capable of doing. Based on this, in Britain 1918, the representation of the peoples' Act was passed granting the vote to women over the age of 30 years to own houses, and in 1928, this was finally extended to all women over eighteen (18). Therefore, the first wave feminism paid greater attention to granting women the right to vote in election.

## **5.2 The Second Trend of Feminism**

This could also be referred to as the Second-wave feminism. This trend started in 20th century; identified as a period of feminist activity from the early 1960s

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through the late 1980s, and it saw cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. The trend encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and reflective of a sexist power structure. The trend focused on cultural equality, like ending discrimination. Second-wave feminism focused on issues like “sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities.”<sup>68</sup> It also argued on domestic violence, establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelters, and changes in custody and divorce law. Some scholars like Simone de Beauvoir in the 1940s examined the notion of "why is a woman the other" <sup>68</sup>in a patriarchal society. Her main argument in her work, *The Second Sex* is that male-centered ideology was being accepted as a norm and enforced by the ongoing development of myths, and that the fact that women are capable of getting pregnant, lactating, and menstruating is in no way a valid cause or explanation to place them as the "*The Second Sex*". This work was later regarded as the foundation of the feminist ideology. Further, the movement in 1967 succeeded getting “the Executive Order extending full affirmative action rights to women, against illegal sex, and the Women's Educational Equity Act”<sup>68</sup> Part of this includes educational equality, health and family planning, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, the outlawing of marital rape, and the legalization of no-fault

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divorce.”<sup>68</sup> An aspect of this is stressed in 1975 law requiring the U.S. Military academies to admit women, and many Supreme Court cases, perhaps most notably *Reed v. Reed* of 1971 and *Roe v. Wade* of 1973. Second-wave feminism was largely successful, with the failure of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and Nixon's veto of the Comprehensive Child Development Bill of 1972. Therefore, the changing of social attitudes towards women is usually considered the greatest success of the women's movement. In January 2013, US Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, announced that the longtime ban on women serving in US military combat roles had been lifted, and this laid the ground for the US Department of Defense plans to integrate women into all combat positions in the years leading up to the year 2016. Second-wave feminists viewed popular culture as sexist, and created pop culture of their own to counteract this. The force of the movement was reduced in the early 1980s with the intra-feminism disputes of the feminist sex wars over issues such as sexuality and pornography. One project of second wave feminism was to create 'positive' images of women, to act as a counterweight to the dominant images circulating in popular culture and to raise women's consciousness of their oppressions.”<sup>68</sup> The second wave feminism is a period of women's liberation movement and struggle to end discrimination for them, cultural and political inequality are inextricably linked and encourage

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women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized as well as reflective of a sexist structure of power and stereotyping .One of the influential and famous scholar of the wave was Simone de Beauvoir who was a French existentialist feminist. She accepted the precept that existence precedes essence and that one is not born a woman but becomes one in her book which was described as a moral revolution. She questioned philosophy's lack of understanding of the historical and specific nature of women's oppression. She also questioned, how, if everyone possessed the freedom to make decisions and the capacity to take existential "leaps into the unknown as existentialism holds, the endless oppression of women, or was the freedom to choose actually illusory? Beauvoir argued that women have historically been considered attempts to emulate male's "normality",<sup>68</sup> and that this mental attitude actually limited women's success and achievement and self-identification. She upheld that for feminism to move forward, this assumption must be set aside. According to the second wave feminism, the women advancement can be achieved through women's education in the work place in different societies, and equal rights amendment in the constitutions of various countries. When all these are taking into consideration, the women as human being will re-identify themselves and will re-awake from her mental slumber for self. Second-wave Feminism in the U.S. coincided in the early



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1980s with the feminist sex wars and was overlapped by third wave feminism in the early 1990s. Hence, in 1990s the third-wave feminism emerged.

### **5.3 The Third Trend Feminism**

The term 'Third Wave was coined by Rebecca Walker to focus on “queer and non-white women.”<sup>68</sup> The third wave came into effect between 1990 and 2000, and it is thought to still be in occurrence today. It encompasses several diverse strains of feminist activities and studies. It began in the early 1990s and continues to the present. It is an individual movement in the sense that its purpose includes redefining what it is to be a feminist. The third wave arose partially as a response to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism, and the backlash against initiatives and movements created during the 1960s, '70s and '80s. It attempts to expand feminism to include women with a diverse set of identities. Hence, recognizing that women are of many colors," ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds. Gender violence, reproductive rights, reclaiming derogatory terms has become a central issue for third-wave feminists.”<sup>68</sup> Gender violence such as rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. They wanted to transform the traditional notions of sexuality and embrace the “exploration of women's feelings about sexuality that included vagina-centered topics as diverse as orgasm, birth, and rape.”<sup>68</sup> Based on this, they suggested free access to contraception and abortion, and maintained that they are women's reproductive

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rights. This position begs for moral substantiation. The third wave feminism focuses on responsible choice grounded in dialogue, respect and appreciation for experiences and dynamic knowledge, an understanding of "the personal is political"<sup>68</sup> that incorporates both the idea that;

personal experiences have roots in structural problems and the idea that responsibility, individuated personal action have social consequences, Use of personal narratives in both theorizing and political activism and Political activism as local, with global connections and consequences.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, it can be seen as a reaction to or continuation of second-wave feminism, and constitutes a partial destabilization of constructs from the second wave. The related concept of inter-sectionalism was introduced in 1989, a few years before the third wave began, but it was during this wave that the concept was embraced. To buttress this, Walker writes; "I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave"<sup>68</sup> she sought to establish that third-wave feminism was not just a reaction, but a movement in itself, because women's issues were far from over.

Third-wave feminists widened their objectives by focusing on ideas like eccentric concepts, and abolishing gender role expectations and typecasts. Unlike the

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determined second-wave feminists' support to women in pornography, sex work, and prostitution, third-wave feminists were rather ambiguous; while some thought these sexual acts were degrading and oppressing women, others saw it as exemplifying the idea that women were in control of their sexuality. They focus less on political changes and more on individualistic identity. Hence, the shift from second wave feminism commenced as a result of many legal and institutional rights that were extended to women; these rights brought changes in stereotypes, media portrayals, and language that define woman. Third-wave ideology focuses on a more post-structuralism interpretation of gender and sexuality. In deconstructing equality-versus-difference: or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism, Joan W. Scott describes how language has been used as a way to understand the world, however, "poststructuralists insist that words and texts have no fixed or intrinsic meanings, that there is no transparent or self-evident relationship between them and either ideas or things, no basic or ultimate correspondence between language and the world."<sup>68</sup> Further, the third wave feminists allow women to define feminism for themselves by incorporating their own identities into the belief system of what feminism is and what it can become through one's own perspective. Scholars like Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards in *Manifesta*, argued that "Feminism can change with every generation

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and individual.”<sup>68</sup> The fact is that feminism is no longer limited to an area as we expect to see it now. Today, women have really gained from what feminism propagated. Nowadays, some women emerged from college, higher institutions before marriage and equally work outside the home; they challenge some of the received wisdom of the past. Many other feminists of color, seek to negotiate a space within feminist thought for consideration of subjects related to race. Third-wave feminists have recently utilized the internet and modern technology to enhance their movement, which has allowed for information and organization to reach a larger audience. Thus:

The increasing ease of publishing on the Internet meant that electronic magazines and blogs became ubiquitous. Many serious independent writers, not to mention organizations, found that the Internet offered a forum for the exchange of information and the publication of essays and videos that made their point to a potentially huge audience. The Internet radically democratized the content of the feminist movement with respect to participants, aesthetics, and issues.<sup>68</sup>

This showcases that the movement for feminism stimulated women to become gender-conscious and to distinguish themselves away from organizations for men as well as create and organize movements and organization with their own identities as feminists in mind. Today, Islamic women are standing up for their rights of language, culture, and identity, all of which contribute to individual’s

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recognition as Muslims and characteristics of themselves as human being. Women still face challenges with discrimination and sexism. This wave seeks to challenge what it deems essentialist definitions of femininity. For them, gender roles are due to social conditioning and there are no inherent differences between the sexes, like philosophy, the reality of feminism are perspectivistic and can be viewed from multi-dimensional spheres. The tendencies in the women's movement can be deciphered namely, Eco feminism, Marxist feminism, Radical African feminism and so on. The Proponents of third-wave feminism include Rebecca Walker, Anita Hil, Gloria Anzaldúa, Bell Hooks, Kerry Ann Kane, Cherríe Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, Reena Walker.

#### **5.4 Fourth Trend of Feminism**

In the year 2008, the fourth wave of feminism emerged. According to Jennifer Baumgardner, it was inspired partly by “Take Our Daughters to Work Days”<sup>68</sup> and incorporates online resources such as social media. Later, it was in turn inspired by the Doula Project for children's services and inspired after-abortion talk lines, pursuit of reproductive justice, plus-size fashion support, transgender support, and sex work acceptance; and led to developing media including feminizing, racialicious, blogs, and Twitter campaigns. Diana Diamond defines fourth-wave feminism as a “movement that combines politics, psychology, and spirituality in an

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overarching vision of change."<sup>68</sup> Kira Cochrane in her work *All the Rebel Women: The Rise of the Fourth Wave of Feminism*, defines it as a movement that is connected through technology."<sup>68</sup> Fourth-wave feminism is often associated with online feminism specially using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other forms of social media to discuss, uplift, and activate gender equality and social justice . This culture is indicative of the continuing influence of the third wave, with its focus on micro-politics and challenging sexism and misogyny insofar as they appear in everyday rhetoric, advertising, film, television and literature, the media, and so on. Fourth-wave feminism stands on the shoulders of the past waves. The addition of more advanced technology along with broader ideas of equal rights set the newest wave apart from the former. They focus on intersectionality, the repudiation of trans-exclusionary, radical feminism and on solidarity with other social justice movement. The presence of individuals who are uncomfortable with the word feminism, because of assumptions of a gender binary and exclusionary subtext; for women only, according to Martha Rampton. Kira Cochrane, a fourth wave feminist in her article describes that the fourth wave focuses on inequality manifesting in "street harassment, sexual harassment, workplace discrimination ... body-shaming"<sup>68</sup> media images, "online misogyny", "assault on public transport",<sup>68</sup> and intersectionality, relying on social media technology for communication and

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online petitioning for organizing, and sharing with prior waves, a perception that individual experiences are shared and thus can have political solutions. It generates forum that discusses ways to improve solidarity across campus women movements. Reina Gosset argued for trans and gender non-conforming people, prison reform, overlapping systems of oppression and the relationship between personal and political. She aimed that this wave was not to solve sexism but in using the recent technology like social media, internet, and twitter in getting people to take the first step of just realizing there is a problem that needs to be fixed and addressed. Some of the proponents of this wave are Jennifer Baumgardner Kira Cochrane, Jessica Valenti, Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett and Holly Baxter.

### **5.5 Eco Feminism**

This is a feminism that linked with "ecology"<sup>23</sup>; they argue that domination of women stems from the same patriarchal ideologies that bring about the domination and destruction of the environment. This type of feminism movement was coined by a French writer called Françoise D'Eaubonne in her work "*Le Féminisme ou La Mort*"; "it connects the domination and exploitation of woman with that of the environment"<sup>23</sup>. According to her, there is an interconnection of male domination of woman and in nature both in social structure and in cultural ideology. Thus, there is a connection between women and nature that comes from their shared history of oppression by a patriarchal society. Hence, women should rise up for

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an ecological revolution in order to revolutionize human relation and gender with the society at large. For the Eco feminist, the women have a connection to the environment through their daily interaction with it that has been ignored. They see the domination of women as stemming from the same ideologies that bring about domination of the environment that is a system where males control the environment which is seen as responsible for women's oppression and the abuse of the natural environment.

Further, the Eco feminist upheld that the male exploit the environment for their self-interest, profit, success and pleasure, hence, they dominate women and the environment. However, this Eco feminist focuses much on a mystical connection between nature and women rather than the actual conditions of women oppression by men.

### **5.6 Marxist Feminism**

This trend of feminism brings up humanity on how the reality of class can affect the social structure of society and how in a more pervasive way gender affects the social character of society. It is the trend of feminism that focuses on examining and elucidating the way in which the system of capitalism and private property have been oppressive to women. In fact, humans have been led astray for taking the sole definition of humans to be masculine. According to them, the beliefs have



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affected the human social interaction today. The problem for Marxist feminist have been "how to represent feminism within class struggle, how to understand the relations between patriarchy and capitalism, how to confronts and oppose male chauvinism in the working class."<sup>68</sup> Society has become a system whereby males dominate women through the control of women's productive and reproductive labour. For them, liberation can only be achieved by working in both cultural and economic sources of women's oppression because women's oppression can be found in the inequalities that develop in connection with the class system of private property. In other words, this trend views gender inequality as inherent in the capitalist system that makes huge profit on women's unpaid labour in the workforce. This means that women are unable to be free due to their financial dependence on male in the society; economic dependence is a driving force of women's subjugation to men. In this regard, true equality can only be achieved when there is economic overhaul and independence. Further, equality can be achieved where there is equal distribution of labour irrespective of gender differences which the current legislation is built upon capitalist ideology that will not favour the proletariat. However, the main problem with Marxism Feminism is the whole idea of a classless society that is considered as a utopia

## **5.7. THE SECOND SEX INFLUENCE ON WOMEN LIBERATION IN AFRICA**

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### **5.7.1 African Feminism**

Women's insurgencies for social change have been encouraged and sustained by the bulks of many African cultures (the patriarchal setting nonetheless) to create spaces of female power in social and religious sphere.

African feminism is “a type of feminism innovated by African women that specifically addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women (African women who reside on the African continent)”<sup>68</sup> African feminism includes many strains of its own, including Motherism, Femalism, Snail-sense Feminism, Womanism or women palavering, Nego-feminism, Stiwanism, and African Womanism.<sup>68</sup> Because Africa is not a pillar, these feminisms are not all reflective of the experiences African women have. Some of the feminisms are more specific to certain groups of African women and aligned in dialogue, or in conflict with African women in the diaspora, rather than African women living in their distinct countries. African women's fight against multiple colonialisms took different forms, with the refashioning of culturally defined strategies to meet new realities and challenges. Colonial interventions and other forms of foreign intrusions and imperial hegemonies forced shifts in power distribution and gender relations that to a large extent placed women at a disadvantage .Some scholar argue that; African women's dissatisfaction with colonialism's exacerbation of gender inequalities and marginalization of women could well have been the subtext

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of women's participation in anti-colonial struggles. The rationale, strategies, modalities, and contexts governing women's social action in Africa are as heterogeneous and complex as the continent itself and cannot be adequately captured by a monolithic idea such as feminism.

African feminisms have certain features, cultures, and values that make them difference from Western feminisms. African feminism is not as clannish, in terms of articulation and gender participation, as Western feminism appears to be. In its articulation, it spreads through with the language of concession, spirit of team work, and arbitration; in its practice, it invites men as partners in social change. Motherhood and maternal politics are not marginalized in African feminism but are central. African feminism is proactive; it marks its specificities, and priorities that often go beyond the intersection of gender, race, and class to include the consequences of colonialism and its aftermath as well as the new order imposed by global capitalism. African feminism's reason for being is not determined by its resistance to Western feminism rather, it is based on its cultural and antique perspectives or setting. Namoi Nkekalah writes that, African feminisms can be defined as "strives to create a new, liberal, productive and self-reliant African woman within the varied cultures of Africa."<sup>68</sup> Thus, Feminisms in Africa, ultimately, aim at modifying culture as it affects women in different societies. The

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importance that many women place upon collectivism, socialism and family makes their desire to work with men to develop an inclusive approach to solving gender issues. In order to eradicate the oppression women face because of their gender, working with men has become a prerequisite; because African way of life is based on communalism rather than individualism that is practiced in the global west. The individual in Africa lives in the community, by the community, and for the community. To buttress this view, Okolo states that “communalism is the determinant of African social organization, everybody is related to everybody else, and the family is the fountain –head of African solidarity. Thus, communalism is at the root of economic and social relationship.”<sup>68</sup> It is opposed to individualism in that the relationship between the mother and the child is not only based on umbilical cord and not just on the individual mother alone but on the community. For whatever happens on the individual, happens on the community. Thus, Okolo argues that “communalism in so far as it is a democratic system and in so far as it is a common shelter under which all the members of the extended family operate and housed contains the germ of the realization of the individual and of his personality.”<sup>68</sup>

The issue of the position of women in Africa is a philosophical problem. It is a philosophical problem that needs to be addressed .Madubuchi Dukor in his article

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“African Philosophy and Pathology of Traditionalism” defined “a philosophical problem as an issue or subject that is hardly settled epistemologically and logically.”<sup>68</sup> This showcases that the issue of women liberation should not be settled both logically and epistemologically but metaphysically. The issue of African women has to be address with a question like “Is African women created by God? Does her colour make her not to develop? How has her development eluded her? Why do some African women exhibit inferior complex before other human creatures? Well, existential stereotypes have come to define the African women economically, politically and culturally. African Women problem is not a riddle that can be solve only by looking at her history. There is need for a synchronic examination which is interesting and understanding because everything about Africa women when compared with white women is different. Her history, origin , personality are all in doubt, therefore an African women problem is metaphysical absurdity, her problem of identity is one of the fundamental problem and philosophical problem .Hence their need to identify, redefine, and actualize the position of the African in the struggle of her development. The African women were less seen in the economic, political planning in their various countries of governance. The economic planning and implementation virtually include women in budgeting. Distinct economic panaceas for the survival and development of women failed woefully even though there have been a lot of women empowerment

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in various countries. The pivot of African women liberation is something that needed epistemological, economical and metaphysical approach. It is something that defied the law of contradiction meaning that F is F nothing can both be F and not F; thus everywoman is either F or not F. Therefore the African women should identify her identity .The incapacity of African women to adapt herself and respect these laws of identity and thought is a philosophical problem in her struggle for liberation .Hence the identity problem is mostly the reason of women not defining, refining, redefining and actualizing of her development. African feminism has emerged to enable the African women to awake from mental, economic, political and academic slumber. African feminism deals with African women experiences because they are dependent on indigenous plan. They based their views or ideas on the cultures and histories of African people so as to create the essential ideas or tools needed to equip, and educate both male and female. The African feminist incorporate teamwork, partnership in their pursuit of freedom so as to ensure that both women and men contribute to the improvement of the material conditions of women .Thus, the African feminism is very active engagement with sexes relationship .It investigates inwardly on how to empower women while ensuring their equality to men despite role differences.

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The African feminist includes men in their gender theory and activism because men are active in the majority of policy making in almost all the countries in Africa. Again, the males have so much power and control in the society. Further, the principle of communalism is very essential to African woman .She places much importance to it .Communalism which is Africanism is very essential in any human person in Africa. It can be like with Aristotle's assertion that "man is a social animal". He who lives without society is either a beast or a god."<sup>68</sup> Man is born in community, lives in community and dies in community. Human is a gregarious animal. They possess an inborn quality for social life which is essential for them. In Africa, without community, they cannot live a good life. Communalism is against individualism in the western world .African women value family continuity than every other continent. Thus, the importance that many women place on communalism and family result in their desire to work with men to develop an inclusive approach to solving gender issues. Hence, to eradicate the oppression women encounter because of their gender, it becomes possible that working with men is very essential. Sequel to this vision of African feminists, African feminism has different epochs which this work aimed at discussing and also propounds its own theory as "LADYISM" for vivid understanding of African feminism.

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## **5.8. VARIANTS OF AFRICAN FEMINISM**

### **5.8.1. Womanism**

The word 'womanism 'was used to describe feminism as being useful. It was defined as “a theory that places feminist vision within black woman’s experiences with culture, subjugation, oppression, colonialism that impact African women lives.”<sup>68</sup> It deals with the identification of the women’s problem relating to male dominance in the society, hence seeking solution to women liberation both inwardly and outwardly so as to establish peaceful co-existence in the universe. The proponent African scholar includes Catherine O. Acholonu.

### **5.8.2. Stiwanism**

This kind of African feminism upheld the view that the struggle for liberation by African women is a result of colonial and neo-colonial structure and attitude of African men in the countries social stratification. It was founded by Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie.

### **5.8.3. Nego- Feminism**

This type of African feminism upheld the idea of theorizing, practicing, and pruning Africa’s ways of life. Obioma Nnemeka defined it as the “feminism of negotiation, it is structured by cultural imperatives and modulated by ever shifting local and global exigencies.”<sup>68</sup>



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#### **5.8.4 Motherism**

The term motherism according to Acholonu in her work *'Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism'* is defined as "multi-dimensional theory that involves the dynamics of ordering, re-ordering, creating structures, and building and rebuilding in co-operation with Mother Nature at all level of human endeavor."<sup>68</sup> She upheld that motherist can be a woman or a man. Motherism has no sex difference because both men and women care for their children .It is a matter of partnership, love co-operation, patience, and understanding. It is a complementarily relationship on which the male and female co-exist among themselves.

#### **5.8.5. Femalism**

This is another type of African feminism. It is described as a hue of African feminism. Opera Chioma states that "it is a hue of African feminism that is a softer tone than liberal feminism highly polarized from radical feminism."<sup>68</sup> Its core African accentuates the African women's body.

#### **5.8.6. Snail-Sense Feminism**

Snail –sense feminism is "a theory that encourages woman to work slowly like the Snail's movement in her dealings with men in the tough and very difficult patriarchal society they live in."<sup>68</sup> It upholds that women must learn survival strategies to be able to overcome the impediments placed before them, and live a

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good life. This becomes very needful in an African world that is domineeringly patriarchal.

### **5.8.7. Focu-Feminism**

According to Onyeka, C. Focu- feminism is “a new brand of feminism that proposes the need for each woman to focus on herself for liberation from perceived oppression, for empowerment and to impact positively on everyone around her, irrespective of gender.”<sup>68</sup> Focus-Feminism argues that the idea of blaming men or patriarchy for the oppression, subjugation, and marginalization of women, their bondage and violence against them has been overstretched, so, no longer relevant in the contemporary society. It interrogates the feminists’ war against men while the real enemy is the woman herself. It is not combative, but seeks to empower her to be in a position to say, no or yes, as the need arises instead of hiding behind the mask of culture or convention to justify her actions. Here, the woman is therefore enjoined to “...Journey into the self, see what fruit it bears.”<sup>68</sup> to really know who she is. The hope is that knowledge will be her true liberation. This journey into the self is expected to aid the woman’s understanding of her capabilities, accept who she is, what she wants and what the people, especially women, around her want. It is not about herding women together to fight a “just cause.”<sup>68</sup> but for each woman to contribute her quota from her own perspective to her empowerment and progress of her society. Focu-Feminism emphasises individual understanding and

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perception of a problem and the need for individual search for solution, which calls for a dependence on self, based on individual strengths and weaknesses. There is need for sensitisation and this is where collectivism comes in. The need to create awareness is no doubt necessary, but each woman understands the cause from her perspective relates it to her experience and decides on her survival strategy based on her peculiar situation. social change which, here, starts from the self and if each woman focuses on herself, how to make herself better and how to make her environment better, violence against women will be eliminated. Focu-feminism is a variant of feminism which submits that each woman's experience is different and should be tackled differently. It posits that oppression is oppression; subjugation is subjugation; marginalization is marginalization; exploitation is exploitation.

#### **5.8.8. Ladyism**

This form of African feminism is projected by this study on noticing the limits of the other African feminist variants, and discovering that each particularized only on women, which is a fraction of the issue that feminism should incorporate, ladyism on the other hand, comprises not only the female folk but equally, the male humans. It is defined as a feminist movement that is geared towards the emancipation of all humans experiencing oppression, exploitation and indeed, all forms of dehumanization from both the matriarchal and patriarchal world. That is, it recognizes that the male, as well as the female, experiences social and institutional exploitation, suppression and oppression. Consequently, it aims at reconciling liberty, equality and authority in African cultural system. In other

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words, the theory is of the view that the welfare of all individuals, not just the women, should be taking into consideration in policy planning of any African state. This gives urgency to the need for the legalization of gender equality, cutting across economic equality, political equality, and social or institutional equality of all female in all ramifications. Ladyism argues that remuneration be given to both women and men for the services they provide in nation building. It also seeks for equity, equal opportunities and reimbursement to all sexes in African governance.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Evaluation

Today, the concept of women's right and its advocacy is what seems to have engrossed the attention of social activists, development agencies and the civil society. The need to empower women is of great importance and in demand, so as to restructure human societies, and establish a humanistic confederation of people without the disregarding of sex, characteristics, racial qualities and religious orientations. According to Christine Littleton, there is need for reconstruction of sexual and gender inequality; there is need for a humanistic society which will not be either women-centered or men-centered. The issue of women's freedom can be regarded as historic, episodic, and eventful. The feminist agitation for freedom seen in Mary Wollstonecraft's work *A Vindication of the Right of Women*, espouses that "equality should be gender-neutral and not gender-biased."<sup>68</sup> She argues that in matters of political activities, education, work, and employment, women should not be discriminated against nor disadvantaged. She opts for equal status of women in relation to their male counterpart in social arrangements. Equally, for John

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Stuart Mill in his work, '*The Subjection on Women*', "women shouldn't just be treated as men's equal but that women are indeed equal to men."<sup>68</sup> He argued that the society should respect women's rights to equality especially in all ramifications, both in political decisions and participation. The philosophical import of the women movement was given much force when Simone de Beauvoir wrote her challenging and thought provoking book, *The Second Sex*, in 1949. She argued that from the purely psychologically phenomenological point of view, societies have inbuilt structures that tend to limit woman's affirmation of herself as an authentic, essential, autonomous human being. According to Beauvoir, "One is not born a woman but becomes a woman."<sup>68</sup> She argued that no one is born a woman but one only grows to be a woman, referring to the socialization process that tends to define mood and refine a person as it was common with other existentialists like Jean Paul Sartre, Heidegger and so on. However, when viewed from the political-ideological, utilitarian and existentialist point of view, the work can be seen as the philosophy of feminism that attracts both theoretical-philosophical ideology and as well touches practical dimension of human life. This dimension of the work has provoked scintillating thoughts by scholars on the ideas of feminism which continues into the present era. Hence, her work can be regarded as both an idea and a method in the feminist world. In this regard, feminism consists of both ideational and methodological standpoint, for it is a reactive

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movement that is geared towards women liberation resolving the undue patriarchy of human society, prompting the need for lucid attention to the women liberation issues. Trenchantly, Beauvoir's thought critically considered, is inherently and endemically controversial. Incorporated into African feminism, it illumines the fact that the African values seem to subsume the woman under the male authority; men are most active majority in the policy making in almost all the countries in Africa. This is as African tradition bequeaths the males with so much power and control in the society. This put differently, African communal life bespeaks of male dominance over their female counterparts. But, on broader consideration, Beauvoir's ideas exude the individualism in the western world which as it is stands against the communal values of the African. Communalism is very essential to African existence and thriving; hence the African (male or female) places much importance on it. Aristotle observes that "man is a social animal; hence he who lives without society is either a beast or a god."<sup>68</sup> In keeping with this, the African sees the community as very essential to his being; for he is born in community, lives in community and dies in community. He is a gregarious animal as he possesses an inborn quality for social life. All these stand against De Beauvoir's idea of family and reproduction as limitations on the woman. As it is, African women value family and continuity of the family or lineage most; marriage and reproduction are counted signs of progress and happiness not impediments to self

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fulfillment. Therefore, in Africa the intention should be to interpret the family as showing the desire of the women to work with men to develop an inclusive

approach to solving social problems; gender issues most paramount of them. Bearing this in mind then, to eradicate the oppression women encounter because of their gender, it becomes possible that working with men is very essential. It should be admitted, and even Beauvoir accepts that it is the masses of experiences and aspirations that are the forces that bind humans together in the world, and these should be employed in feminist struggle. Women's world in the margin, be it in the domestic or public sphere, constitutes a subversive space for campaign against marginalization.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the work discovers that majority of human creatures, both male and female are under oppression and need to be liberated; Beauvoir's theory is interpretation of women's marginalization and struggle irrespective of background, class and race. Also, Beauvoir's theory of „Otherness“ provides a clarifying pedestal on which to hang and scrutinize African examples. The relevance of the theory of otherness in examining marginal spaces is indisputable in African women liberation struggle, hence; it becomes pertinent that the theory of Ladyism be

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included in the movement. Ladyism incorporates both female and male humans in its demand. Its intention is towards the emancipation of all human from matriarchal and patriarchal world, and equally, reconciling liberty, equality and authority in African cultural system so as to ratify gender equality. The theory is of the view that the welfare of individual not just women should be taken into consideration in policy planning of all African states. There is need for the consideration of all human creatures, granting them legal equality, economic equality, political equality, and social equality in all ramifications. Consequently, the theory maintains that wages be given to any human for the services they provide in the nation building. It seeks for equity, equal opportunity and reimbursement to female in African governance just as their male counterparts receive. Further, the research is of the view that the economic equality has to be given an important place in the struggle for women emancipation because all political independence without economic independence is useless. Economic equality does not demand equal distribution of wealth but equal economic opportunities to develop oneself. It demands primary needs of life like employment, education, and reasonable wages and so on, for humans. There is need for the society to re-evaluate the economic system that is operated so as to provide equal opportunity for both sexes, and fight against inequality. There may never be an absolute economic equality, but a relatively equal measure should be put in place.

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Sequel to this, economic equality can be achieved through piecemeal reforms, because without economic equality the demand for political equality becomes impossible. It should be borne in mind that unequal distribution of wealth and power results to social disorders. Hence, it is important not only for women independence but also for social stability, order and peace. There is also need for affirmative action to be carried on in the society, like making policies that should be used in the country to increase opportunities for women; favoring them in job placement and promotion, admission into universities and the awarding of government contracts. This is bearing in mind that women have been under-represented in different public spheres; such an affirmative action needs to be taken by the government, educational institutions so as to remedy the effects of the past discrimination against them. African leaders should make policies that will ban such negative cultures or beliefs that affect human rights and freedom. Equal employment opportunities need to be created in state policies, just as is reflected in civil right acts of 1964 in USA.

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