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Simone de Beauvoir: A Feminist Thinker for Our Times

KAREN VINTGES

For many, Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex has only historic significance. The aim of this article is to show on the contrary that Beauvoir's philosophy already contains all the elements of contemporary feminism—so much so that it can be taken as its paradigm. Beauvoir's ideas about the self are extremely relevant today. Feminist themes such as the logic of “equality and difference” and identity are interwoven in her thinking in ways that can offer solutions to what seem to be insurmountable dilemmas in modern feminism. The attack on all kinds of essentialism can be reconciled with feminist identity-politics when the latter presents itself as “arts of living.”

Contemporary feminist theorists often declare that Simone de Beauvoir's thinking is rationalistic, too old-fashioned modernist, and above all male biased.¹ At the recent Fiftieth Anniversary of “The Second Sex” conference in Paris, the main opinion was that Beauvoir's work should be valued only for historical reasons: feminists should become more aware of their own historical background. Other conference attendees believed that Beauvoir's ideas were really outdated. In spite of this apparent dismissal, I show that Beauvoir's philosophy already encompasses all the elements of contemporary feminism—so much so that it can be taken as its paradigm. However, these elements are not immediately obvious. For a complete characterization of Beauvoir's thinking, we need examine the philosophical backgrounds of her life and work. In doing so, one discovers that Beauvoir's supposed rationalistic approach is only a cliché, and in fact she argues for both men and women to become a sensitive self. Also, she is not just an old-fashioned modernist thinker, but her concept of the self is up-to-date in light of postmodernism's critique of the fixed self. After sketching these topical clues of Beauvoir's thinking, which are relevant in my opinion for many current philosophical debates,² I outline my interpre-

tation of Beauvoir in relation to contemporary feminism, especially in relation to its logic of "equality and difference" and to its theme of identity. Finally, I show that Beauvoir's thinking gives us a clue as to how to solve some of the dilemmas of contemporary feminism, that is, some contemporary feminist contentions.³

BECOMING SENSITIVE SELVES

The Second Sex (originally published in 1949 as *Le Deuxième sexe*), Beauvoir's study on the situation of women, provoked much dispute and discussion at the start of the 1960s feminist movement. This discussion still continues. Exploring the historic situation of women, Beauvoir concluded that women have been prevented from taking active control of their lives. Woman has been the Other throughout culture; man has been the Self, the subject. Woman has been subjected to man, who, partly with woman's consent, has made her an extension of himself. For the first time in history, Beauvoir wrote in 1949, through the availability of contraceptives and the access to paid work, women have the chance to develop into a Self as well. *The Second Sex* is a passionate appeal to women to take this chance.

Twenty years after the book's appearance, the new feminist movement discovered it. This movement had focused on the liberation of female sexuality and on economic autonomy for women. Influential were the works of Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millett, and Betty Friedan, all of whom admitted—in the case of Millett and Friedan only many years later—that Beauvoir's works started them "on the road" (Dijkstra 1980, 293).

However, with respect to the theme of the liberation of female sexuality, after a few years, the new women's movement radicalized, stressing the difference between men and women, between masculinity and femininity. Instead of becoming equal to men, women were to develop their own values, which would amount to a complete cultural revolution. Although part of the 1960s emerging women's movement had embraced Beauvoir, other factions of the movement criticized her intensely: *The Second Sex* was condemned as a male view of women and was superseded by the new, real feminism.

Psychoanalytical theory became important as a source of knowledge about female sexuality as well as an inspiration for the articulation of a different form of thinking and writing compared to the masculine logocentric approach. Feminist theoreticians such as Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, and French writers such as Hélène Cixous, have sought to develop an *écriture féminine*, arguing that femininity lies outside the dominant subject form in Western society. Because it had been excluded from culture, the feminine would be culture-critical above all and its articulation was seen as a revolutionary project. These French feminists all mentioned Beauvoir in one way or another as an extremely important figure for their own lives, but they remained distant from

her so-called male philosophical point of view.⁴ Many feminists believed that in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir merely was applying Sartrean existentialism.

However, Beauvoir did not simply copy Sartre's ideas.⁵ The philosophy of *The Second Sex* does not fit the purely ontological type of philosophy that Sartre practiced in *Being and Nothingness* (originally published in 1943), nor does it fit his Cartesian concept of the self. Beauvoir situated her own work in history. She dealt with contemporary reality, stating, as mentioned earlier, that through the availability of contraceptives and the access to paid work, women on a large scale would have the chance to develop into a Self. From this it is clear that she was not practicing pure ontology. Because of its background in French Hegelianism⁶ the philosophy of *The Second Sex* can be better characterized as an "ontology of the present," a phrase from Michel Foucault's article on Immanuel Kant's essay "What is Enlightenment?" (Foucault 1995, 148). According to Foucault, Kant founded the two great critical traditions of modern philosophy, one being the analytics of truth. By asking "What is the *Aufklärung*?" Kant also founded another kind of critical tradition—one that interrogates the present, that deals with the question of contemporary reality and especially with the question of who we are today. Since Kant, this form of philosophy is evident "from Hegel, through Nietzsche and Max Weber, to the Frankfurt School" (Foucault 1995, 148), and it is this form of reflection in which Foucault situates his own work. Instead of timeless reasoning, philosophy for Foucault is explicitly historical, situated in time, and deals with the question, Who are we today? In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir, likewise, answered the same question but pertaining to women. She answered it as a philosopher and as a woman, situated at a specific moment in history, the moment that the emancipated woman was about to come into existence. Philosophy likewise was no timeless reasoning to her, but a reflection on the present reality.

If the philosophy of *The Second Sex* amounts to a diagnosis of its time, it is clear that what is described as the Self-Other relationship of men and women is a historical description and not a universal one (see Vintges 1995). Beauvoir does not implicate the necessity for women to become the Self that men have been. If this type of Self has been a historical one, it is not the one she presents as the model for men and women. On the contrary, *The Second Sex* argues that both men and women have to change. Their enmity can be overcome when both have the courage to accept their contingent bodily existence as individuals. Men should give up their desire to *be* and accept their contingency so they will no longer need woman as their mirroring object. Women should no longer choose the safety of a supposed object status, insofar as they did so (Vintges 1996, 145).⁷ Men and women, in other words, should stop using the other sex to hide their status as contingent individuals.

To fully understand why and how the enmity between men and women can be overcome, we have to read *The Second Sex* in the light of Beauvoir's earlier work on ethics, specifically *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (see also Bergoffen 1997).

In her ethical theory, Beauvoir developed a new version of the existentialist philosophy in which solidarity with fellow human beings, corporeality, and emotion are critical. In contrast to Sartre, Beauvoir sees emotion as the positive experience through which we have contact with the world and our fellow human beings. To not experience emotion represents an inability. It is through emotion that we become a psycho-physiological unity, an incarnated human being living in the midst of a world of fellow men (Beauvoir 1953). Sartre strongly advocates lucid, pure conscious existence as the only authentic human existence; Beauvoir, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948b), advocates living as incarnated, situated human beings. She states that our human condition is ambiguous. As situated beings we are a psycho-physiological unity. Beauvoir's philosophical framework in this respect is the phenomenological perspective that approaches humans as situated and incarnated beings. She shares this approach, which Heidegger and others have influenced, with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Lévinas. But she adds to this view that our status as pure consciousness also is an element of our human condition, one that separates us from ourselves and from other people. Where Sartre reduces the human condition to this status, for Beauvoir, it is only an element, one side of human's ambiguous condition. She succeeds in theoretically reconciling the two sides by stating that, by a moral conversion, we continually have to transform separatedness into commitment, thus rising to the level of incarnated situated beings and thus overcoming the separation between ourselves and others. The ambiguous elements of our human condition are not merely set alongside each other but are placed in a specific hierarchical order. We should strive for an existence as a coherent, moral, incarnated self; such an existence appears as a higher phase above pure consciousness.⁸

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir's appeal to women to grasp their chances at developing into a Self therefore cannot be considered a plea for women to become pure Cartesian, rational selves. She wants women to become autonomous selves, but in contrast to Sartre, it is the situated, sensitive self she is after. In this respect, we can say that she claims for women—and men!—what Jean Jacques Rousseau saw as men's prerogative: to be an autonomous self, not to live through others as *être relatif* (a term Beauvoir borrows from Rousseau)—but this self has to be sensitive with sentiments and inclinations. Beauvoir, like Rousseau, thus rescues the sensitive self from ethical marginalization.⁹

BUT WHY A SELF?

Thus far we have concentrated on Beauvoir's argument for the sensitive self rather than the rational self. But why a self? Why should a person become a self? I now concentrate on this question and deal with Beauvoir's ideas on the necessity of creating a self, or an identity.

Identity is much criticized in postmodernist—or, as Judith Butler prefers, poststructuralist—feminist thinking. Identity is seen as restrictive, excluding things and people, and it is therefore seen as something that should be deconstructed rather than constructed. For Beauvoir, however, the theme of identity is crucial, and I hope to demonstrate how we can still benefit from her ideas. First, a brief look at contemporary debates on this issue.

We have seen that since the seventies equality and difference have been two main approaches of contemporary feminism. A third important point of view has developed in this controversy. Contemporary postmodernist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Foucault have attacked the supposed unity of the subject and have formulated the need for an escape from the restrictions of the unitary self. Identity is seen as the *ordre intérieur* of the dominant social order. Other ways of living and forms of subjectivity have to be developed that no longer imprison us in a restrictive identity.

Feminist theoreticians such as Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti elaborate on this view with respect to the feminine subject. If we assume that a unitary subject is already a product of power mechanisms, then we can no longer speak in terms of woman as an essential feminine subject that has to be liberated. Moreover, we should no longer assume the identity of the feminine as an essence that can be articulated. Instead, we should unravel and deconstruct fixed meanings of femininity so that an open space is created to permit the shaping of new ways of thinking and living. Postmodern feminism, with its suspicion of any fixed subject “woman,” expresses the political mood of the feminist movement as it approaches the end of the twentieth century. Differences between women have come to dominate the women’s movement agenda, and universal similarities between women are no longer taken for granted. Postmodern feminism can thus be seen as the third important approach in contemporary feminism, stressing the differences between women rather than their common identity, and stating that any identity as a woman is restrictive. I demonstrate now why Beauvoir’s concept of the self prefigures and anticipates this postmodernist critique of identity as restriction. For this, I turn to her thinking on ethics.

ETHICS AS “ART OF LIVING”

Seeing our human condition as ambiguous, Beauvoir, in opposition to abstract moral theory, introduced a so-called ethics of ambiguity. Man’s ambiguous condition, especially his element of separatedness, is the reason why universal, positive, moral laws cannot exist, because in the end we can never speak for another person. However, the concrete existence of the situated human being can certainly be the locus of a moral dimension. Beauvoir did share Sartre’s aversion to moral theory in so far as she agreed with him that every

human being has to invent his or her own behavior and that no positive maxims or general rules can be applied. But unlike Sartre, Beauvoir keeps a lifelong interest in ethics. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she tries to work out a type of ethics that is not Kantian, that does not consist of general moral rules but instead consists of an attitude. We constantly have to shape ourselves freely into a specific subject in the world. This is an ethical attitude because if we shape ourselves into a subject, we do not live through others; we endorse not only our own freedom but also the freedom of others.

Beauvoir's later critique is directed against her attempt at the end of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* to formulate some methodical moral rules and to inventory some amoral attitudes. Both attempts suffer from abstract schematism, she later declares, but she never distances herself from the core of her argument. To shape ourselves into a specific, responsible subject in the world has always been Beauvoir's crucial ethical theme. For elaboration of this theme, we turn to her literary work and autobiography, where we find the continuation of her thinking on ethics. Because she wanted to do away with abstract schematism as much as possible, she chose the genre of philosophical literature to express her ideas on ethics.

This is immediately apparent in her novel *The Mandarins* (1956) (*Les Mandarins* 1954). Not only are moral decisions the central theme in the novel but a specific type of positive ethics emerges: the notion of a personal ethos in the form of a self-identity, which a specific life-project shapes. Beauvoir introduces a separate term, *art de vivre*, for this type of project.

The writer, Henri, plays an important role in *The Mandarins*. One of the young people in his circle, Lambert, for whom he has an exemplary function, urges him to write novels that can provide a leitmotif for personal actions:

"First of all, we need an ethics, an art of living," Lambert says.
 "You have a sense of what is real. You ought to teach us how to live for the moment."

[Henri protests:] "Formulating an ethics, an art of living, doesn't exactly enter into my plans." His eyes shining, Lambert looked up at Henri. "Oh, I stated that badly. I wasn't thinking of a theoretical treatise. But there are things that you consider important, there are values you believe in." (Beauvoir 1954, 180, 182; my translation)¹⁰

Beauvoir introduces the concept *art de vivre*, that is, art of living as an equivalent to ethics.¹¹ The concept of art of living compactly expresses how moral decisions are made: it not only articulates the fact that ethics take on the form of a concrete, individual approach to life but also represents the attitude that moral decisions come about in a continual creative process without the application of general methods, moral laws, or rules. By taking responsibility for

certain values, we simultaneously create ourselves. In other words, we create ourselves through moral commitment.

Beauvoir argues for a conscious construction of one's own identity out of a heterogeneous collection of elements. In her thinking, everything a person does should contribute to his own identity. "Renouncing all previous anger and desires and giving preference to the emotions of the moment means to smash human existence into worthless fragments, erasing the past"; instead, "it is the task of everyone to realize his individual unity by involving his past in aims for the future" (Beauvoir 1948a, 88, 87–88; my translation).

If Heidegger and Sartre have argued as well that man is constantly creating himself, for them this is a matter of definition: man cannot do otherwise. For Beauvoir women—and men—can certainly do otherwise: they can lack every chance to create themselves, or they can refuse to do so. This means that for Beauvoir it is not a matter of definition but a matter of fact if men and women *do* consciously create themselves as moral subjects. Her argument for reflectivity with respect to our identity is diametrically opposed to Sartre's thinking. In essence, his theory requires us to remain free from a reflective attitude towards our identity, because we immediately make ourselves into a thing, an *en-soi* with fixed properties, and thus we deny our freedom. Compared to this anarchism or nomadism of Sartre,¹² Beauvoir emerges as a real moralist. Her point is that by consciously styling our behavior we should assume our responsibility for a specific collection of moral values, providing ourselves with a coherent identity. However, this does not imply a finalized or closed identity; it remains open to the future, although based on the past, this openness is limited. Beauvoir said she wrote her autobiography because she loved constructing herself so that she could continue to create herself from a firm base (Jeanson 1966, 289). Life for her was "an undertaking that had a clear direction" (Beauvoir 1988, 8).

Beauvoir's autobiographical work thus should be seen in the framework of her ethical theory. It represents her own art of living. The five volumes of her autobiography should be conceived of as a self-technique in a moral sense.¹³ They, as well as her diaries and letters, were a means for her to question her own conduct and to shape herself as an ethical subject, one that could strive for the freedom of her fellow human beings. By her writing practices, she organized and stylized her daily behavior, thus trying to create the type of moral self she strove for. She was not after an essential, unitary self as an effect of introspection or self-realization, but she was after a coherent identity as an effect of stylization, the coherence being an effect of a practical philosophical self-creation.

In this way, Beauvoir gives us a clue to solve some apparent dilemmas of postmodernism. She, like Sartre, was thoroughly familiar with Surrealism and other modernist movements from which postmodernism inherited its suspicion of the unitary deep self.¹⁴ Beauvoir shared Sartre's disgust for the deep

inner self. The self she wants us to win is not the deep psychological one. At stake for her is a moral self: we should commit ourselves to a specific set of moral values by providing ourselves with coherent identities through constant creative activity that amounts to a stylizing of our actions in the world. Beauvoir thus—*avant la lettre*—reconciles postmodernism's aversion of the fixed subject with a moral perspective. Her "art of living" concept is the adequate answer to postmodernism's hiatus in the field of ethics and political theory.¹⁵ Now I concentrate on the relevance of Beauvoir's concepts for contemporary feminism.

BEAUVOIR'S THINKING AS THE PARADIGM OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM

Beauvoir's thinking on identity and her philosophy as such put the three main approaches of contemporary feminism into perspective.

First, *The Second Sex* enables us to perceive the linkages between equality and difference, and thereby clarifies how the two work together in contemporary feminism. Equality between men and women—that is, equality in not being oppressed—is the background against which new personal identities of women will emerge. In *The Second Sex*, no ready-made models for a common, new identity for women exist, only the prediction that cultural differences between men and women will emerge once women's oppression disappears: "There will always be certain differences between man and woman; her eroticism, and therefore her sexual world, have a special form of their own, and therefore cannot fail to engender a sensuality, a sensitivity of a special nature. This means that her relations to her own body, to that of the male, to the child, will never be identical with those the male bears to his own body, to that of the female, and to the child; those who make much of 'equality in difference' could not with good grace refuse to grant me the possible existence of differences in equality" (Beauvoir 1984, 740). And Beauvoir states that new relations will arise between men and women: "New relations of flesh and sentiment of which we have no conception will arise between the sexes; already, indeed, there have appeared between men and women friendships, rivalries, complicities, comradeships—chaste or sensual—which past centuries could not have conceived. I fail to see that . . . liberty ever creates uniformity" (Beauvoir 1984, 740).

We can conclude that equality and difference are interwoven in the philosophy of *The Second Sex* in a way that perfectly captures their continuing dialectic in contemporary feminism. The two seemingly contradictory principles can be combined quite well when one is seen as the precondition for the other: socio-political equality is needed for the emergence of new (forms of) identities of women. Both feminist issues can be seen as part of a larger project that aims at enlarging the freedom for women to decide for themselves how they

will live. Feminists who thought *The Second Sex* merely implies the necessity for women to become identical to men severely criticized it. Closer scrutiny of the text discloses that its aim is exactly the opposite, namely to make women free to create new situations, new cultural meanings, and new ways of experiencing life as a woman.

Second, with respect to the postmodern approach to feminism, by considering the entire corpus of Beauvoir's philosophy, one finds that the crucial theme of postmodernism, that is, the aversion of the fixed subject, is integral to her thought. Beauvoir has put forward the moral self as the product of a continuous project, a personal art of living.

In her life, Beauvoir tried by means of self-techniques, specifically writing practices, to create such a singular moral self. Her project indeed was a singular one, but it had an exemplary purpose as well. She wanted to develop an art of living, a personal style, that could inspire other women to imagine what life as an active and creative woman could be like. She thus practiced the very idea *The Second Sex* develops—that women should create new values and cultural meanings. But Beauvoir practiced and presented it as a singular and contingent project: an *art* of living. She thereby reconciled *avant la lettre* postmodernism's aversion to the fixed subject and the feminist project to develop alternatives for the dominant patriarchal culture. Her personal ethos was the ethos of a woman, she said, but it certainly was not the ethos of Woman.

Encompassing all three approaches of contemporary feminism,¹⁶ Beauvoir's philosophy can be called feminism's paradigm in the sense of its exemplar, that is, its "knowledge embedded in a shared example" as Thomas Kuhn clarifies his notion of paradigm. This concept, he says, mainly wants to refer to the classic example that serves as a practical guideline to scientific research and opinion in a certain field (Kuhn 1970, 192). We can say that Beauvoir's thinking has served as exemplar for contemporary feminism. *The Second Sex* still sets the agenda for much women's studies research, among other things in its questioning of how femininity is constructed, in its method of analyzing literature, and in its making use of ego documents of women (diaries, letters, autobiographies).

Apart from *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir's work and life, that is, her whole philosophical project, has functioned as a real exemplar, determining large areas of experience at the same time.¹⁷ Being the classic example of contemporary feminism,¹⁸ Beauvoir's philosophy not only helps us to clarify the pattern of the three approaches of contemporary feminism but also gives us a clue to solve some apparent dilemmas of contemporary feminism, that is, some contemporary "feminist contentions."

One of the serious problems of postmodern feminism—stressing the differences between women and not their common identity—has been its lack of an agency: if woman no longer exists, then how can feminism? Beauvoir's thinking gives us a clue as to how to solve this apparent dilemma. Paradigmatic for

feminism are *The Second Sex's* attack on all kinds of essentialism and its demand for the removal of all social obstacles that impede concrete (groups of) women. Beauvoir's philosophical framework further implicates that feminist discourses wanting to develop feminist cultural practices—a so-called feminist identity politics—should contain no claims to truth with regard to being a woman and to femininity. Feminist discourses should resist all discourses that attempt to postulate the universal truth about woman, about her desires, her body, her situation in life, and her identity. Feminists should not have pretensions about truth discourses, but should give an ethos form to their discourse, that is, the form of arts of living. Another point concerns the locality of feminist arts of living: these should be presented as discourses with something to offer those attracted to them, not as a compulsory morality for all women. And finally, there can be no question of *the* feminist ethos or way of living. Ethical discourses around being a woman can, of course, differ in contents and vary, for instance, in the degree to which they want to articulate gender. With respect to identity politics, feminism is an umbrella name for different discourses offering an alternative to the dominant culture of femininity.¹⁹

From Beauvoir's philosophy, we see that it is not necessary to do away with any thinking in terms of identity if we want to avoid the fixed identity of the deep self. Thus, we can maintain a pluralistic agency of feminism. By criticizing all ideas, practices, and institutions that essentialize women, we can assert positive ideals when we present them as contingent choices, or rather as concrete and diverse elaborated arts of living. Beauvoir's own life and work amount to the creation of such an art of living. She created a new ethos as a woman without speaking in the name of woman as an essential subject, and without a strong articulation of gender. She advocated the creation of identity as a project of positive moral commitment, whereas at the same time she criticized universal moral truth. Through the description and construction of her own life, she wanted to give other women guidelines for organizing their own lives. But, true to her conception of the singularity of positive ethics, she kept her distance from statements concerning who or what a good woman is, or what real femininity is. Beauvoir's thinking suggests the contours of a positive feminist identity-politics: rather no truth, but an ethos formulated in singular rather than plural terms. After all, Beauvoir stated that feminism is "*une manière de vivre individuellement, et une manière de lutter collectivement*" (Jeanson 1966, 264).

NOTES

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1. Postmodernism distances itself from so-called modernist, that is, Enlightenment, thinking.

2. My treatment of Beauvoir is based on Karen Vintges (1996).
3. I refer here to the philosophical debate on feminism and postmodernism in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (Benhabib et al, 1995).
4. See Luce Irigaray (1990) and Julia Kristeva (1997).
5. See also Bauer (1997), Bergoffen (1997), Heinämaa (1997), Lundgren-Gothlin (1996), and Simons (1998).
6. See especially Lundgren-Gothlin (1996).
7. Bauer (1997) shows how both variants can be characterized as narcissistic.
8. However, the coherence is never reached because the nihilating element of consciousness is always in the background of our existence.
9. For this treatment of Rousseau, see Taylor (1989).
10. In these quotations, the current English translation is not followed exactly because *une morale* and *art de vivre* are translated imprecisely as "a set of principles" and an "approach to life," respectively.
11. This term resembles Foucault's aesthetics of existence, used to designate the self-practices of freedom that he detected in ancient history.
12. I use the term *nomadism* as introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to indicate that similarities between Sartre's position and theirs are worthy of more extensive study.
13. In his final works, Foucault introduces the concept of self-technique to indicate the methods people use to transform themselves into moral subjects.
14. Here, the term *modernism* refers to a specific early twentieth-century art form. To trace these modernist sources of postmodernism see Taylor (1989).
15. See Vintges (1996, 162). Foucault's concept of aesthetics of existence wants to solve this postmodernist hiatus, but his solution suffers from aestheticism and lacks the dimension of emotional commitment. Foucault's cold Greeks and Stoics in this respect fail to be the new inspiration for our time—in spite of Martha Nussbaum's argument for the same cause (see Nussbaum 1994).
16. Beauvoir's philosophy has its roots in three main traditions of our time: rationalist-Cartesian-thinking, pre-romantic-Rousseauist-thinking as well as "pre-postmodern"—that is, surrealist thinking, traditions we see back in the three main approaches of contemporary feminism, that is, equality, difference, and postmodernism respectively. See Vintges (1998).
17. "Paradigms determine large areas of experience at the same time" (Kuhn 1970, 129).
18. Even philosophers of difference such as Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva claim that Beauvoir's life has been an example for them (see note 4). Kristeva wrote *Les Samourais* (1990) in a direct reference to Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*.
19. The above argument can be applied to other kinds of identity-politics, for example, the ones of sexual, ethnic, and national groups. See also Vintges (1991).

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