

Simone De Beauvoir

Rahul Varma & Chloe Son





1908-1986

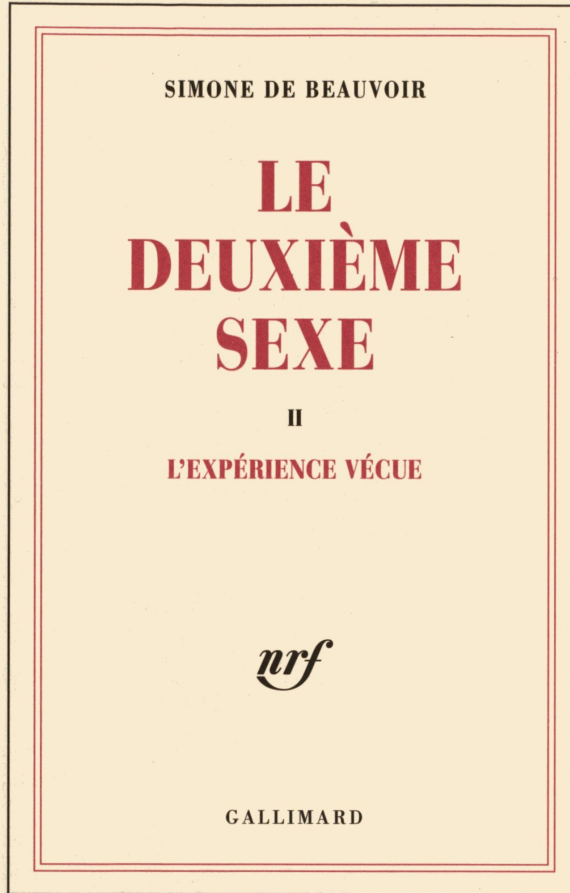
Paris, France

Catholic → Atheist

Sorbonne University

Death of Zaza

Unconventional Relationship w/
Sartre



The Second Sex

Published 1949; Index of Prohibited Books

Rejects Biological Explanations of Secondary Status

1. Economic Independence
2. Birth Control
3. Abortion
4. Child Care

Oppression as Man's "Other"

“One is not born but becomes a woman.”



Second Wave Feminism

Sexuality | Family | Workplace

Reproductive rights | De facto inequalities

Official legal inequalities

Laid groundwork for movement

Male-centric ideology

Enforced by:

1. Myths
2. Pregnancy
3. Lactating
4. Menstruation

Influence on Betty Friedan

Starting point:

experiences of
individual

Emphasizes:

Freedom; interpersonal
relationships; experience
of living as human body

Feminist Existentialism

“Authenticity”

Subject = men

Object = women

Contributions to:
**Feminist
Theory**

Opposed to “*woman belongs at home*”

Woman’s implicit inferiority

Central to **feminism**:

1. Systematic subordination
2. Surrendering to system → bad faith
3. Bad faith → lack of “authenticity”

“Science regards any characteristic as a reaction dependent in part upon a situation.”



Betty Friedan

American feminist

1921 - 2006

The Feminine Mystique

Share existentialism | different contexts

Called for system-friendly reforms:

1. Ideas
2. Culture
3. Education

Core differences with Beauvoir:

Empowerment → white, American, middle class

Female → dominating group

Individualist/Reformist vs Socialistic/Radical



Kate Millett

American lesbian feminist

1934 - Sept. 6 2017

Femininity & womanhood ≠ biological

Wrote *Sexual Politics* : “interior colonization”

Called for:

1. Extreme reorganization of society
2. Eradication of patriarchy

Supported gay liberation

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Simone de Beauvoir's harsh critique of misogynistic biblical texts affected her impact as a feminist leader? How might religious interaction with the feminist movement be different during this period and today?
2. Do you think Simone de Beauvoir's less radical and more broad/inclusive theories of women's empowerment were more effective during the second wave feminist movement?
3. How does Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist distinction between sex and gender contrast from our current understanding the concepts?