

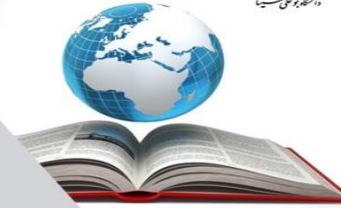


Twinning Existentialism and Feminism: The Intersection of Philosophy and Social Science in Literary Criticism

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Abstract

Built on theoretical ground, this paper aims to bridge existentialism and feminism with the help of the most renowned thinkers in the realm of literary criticism: Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). Benefitting from Sartre's views popularized in *Existentialism is Humanism* (1946), *Between Existentialism and Marxism* (1974), *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (1957), *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943) the paper reveals how he emphasizes the importance of choice, responsibility, and authenticity. He believes in humans' fundamental freedom, and assumes that individuals are responsible for their mindfulness, and their actions. Next, philosophy is interlinked to social science with the existentially feminist insights of Beauvoir reflected in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), *The Second Sex* (1949). Beauvoir accepts the existentialist tenets of Sartre by negating human fate; humans' freedom is absolute, since humans are free to choose in every walk of life. Thus, by promoting freedom and choice, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, a classic feminist text, laid the conceptual framework for second-wave feminism that flourished during the 1960s in the



USA. To conclude, both Sartre and Beauvoir have endeavored to support the notion of the self as well as its connection to personal liberation. Focusing on some of the most prevalent themes in the twenty-century literature — namely freedom, despair, alienation and choice — they have challenged humans' definition of responsibility and partnership to delineate modern ethics and human understanding.

Keywords:

Existentialism, Freedom, Despair, Alienation, Choice, The Second Sex

1. Introduction

The first section of this paper is dedicated to explaining Jean-Paul Sartre's (1905-1980) existential concepts of despair, alienation, identity, choice, and existential crisis. The bridge between the philosophy of existentialism and feminism is built with the second section devoted to the existential feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), particularly her definition of the 'second sex.' The last section provides the concluding remarks of this paper.

Existential philosophers appear to be obsessed with the question of creation and existence of the universe, the sentient beings in this universe, and particularly the question of mankind. Various philosophers have discussed these matters, as well as the ideology behind organized religion, however, the most important and necessary study has been the mystery of human life. One of these philosophers is Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) who is one of the twentieth century's most prominent thinkers and existentialism's principal founder. Concerning human self-



fashioning, Sartre emphasizes the importance of choice, responsibility, and authenticity. Sartre believes in humans' fundamental freedom, and also assumes that individuals are responsible for all aspects of themselves, their consciousness, and their actions.

Along with Sartre, the existentialism of Beauvoir is discussed through many of her books, both literary and metaphysical, including *The Second Sex*, her classic feminist text. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* laid the conceptual framework for second-wave feminism that flourished during the 1960s. Beauvoir accepts the existentialist tenets of Sartre that assume there is no human destiny and that humans' freedom is absolute, specifically, that humans still have a choice in every situation. In other words, there is no autopilot for human life, nor is there an instruction manual informing humans of how to make the correct choices. Human beings are told by Beauvoir to face the reality and to deal with it, which appears to leave very little hope for moral theorizing, considering such uncertainty. Beauvoir argues that absolute solutions and permanent responses must not be expected, as "[m]an fulfils himself in the transitory or not at all" (Beauvoir 1948, 127), which does not mean, however, that all modes of life, and all forms of action, are equally successful. The way forward is to focus at the core of one's links to other people.

2. Existentialism

The concept of 'existentialism' can be explained once this term is broken down to its components, which clarifies that it is composed of the terms 'existence' and 'existentiality,' which demonstrates that this philosophy deals primarily with the meaning of human existence.

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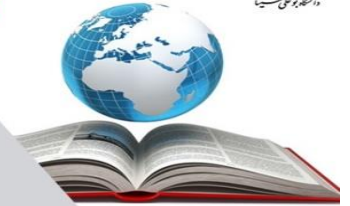
The term ‘exist’ means ‘to be present or real,’ and ‘existence’ represents ‘outer existence,’ consequently ‘existentialism’ is the philosophy that maintains man is the autonomous agent responsible for his own actions. The American Heritage Dictionary identifies existentialism as “a philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one’s acts” (<https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=existentialism>). However, substantial discrepancies among existentialists render it difficult to describe this philosophy properly. Under the influence of French philosopher and writer Jean Paul Sartre, existentialism attracted the attention of European literature and philosophy in the 1940s and 1950s. Existentialism highlights the individual experience as well as the shaping of essence through the act of existence, and one of its fundamental concepts is that existence precedes essence (Sartre, 1985, p. 15).

Existentialism emerged in the 19th century and was noticeable in the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche who responded to the ideology of Hegel, and started developing this ideology via asking questions regarding being, which stressed the value of human life. Kierkegaard who is regarded as the founder of existentialism introduced a religious approach to man’s fear. Nietzsche, on the other side, did not believe in God and opposed religion. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard urged men not to follow the doctrinaire of religious system, moreover, for Nietzsche there was no ideal, no faith, and no god (Spinks, 2003, p. 7). To Nietzsche, man is the lord of the world, and as a consequence, a theistic branch is depicted by

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Marcel, Kierkegaard and Jaspers, and an atheist branch represented by Heidegger, Nietzsche, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. This theory reflects the assumption that existentialism is an approach to life, and in the most fundamental terms, existentialism proposes that human life has no predetermined meaning. All existentialists conclude that man must deal with the consequences of his convictions and choices himself.

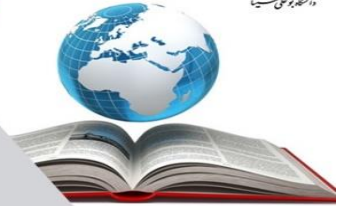
For the existential atheists, since God is dead, man feels alone in this world and is anxious. Man is born without any essence and he gives himself one through his acts, yet he is aware of his finitude and makes his death into an object of reflection. Man has the power to choose what to do and that happens only through his actions, and perhaps he would expect to resolve the absurdity of existence and its meaninglessness. In this struggle for meaning and reality in a universe of absurdity, man thinks that he has no time to accede to such reality, and therefore, he becomes anxious. Furthermore, the passage of time means death, and this thought contributes to man's fear, and thus, he tries to separate himself from society, and his perception of being isolated is exacerbated by the awareness of his finitude.

The existentialist atheism focuses on thought, choice, loneliness, freedom, responsibility, death, and anxiety; in fact, it stresses the atheism, humanism and agnosticism as essentials of a meaningful existence in a world that lacks purpose. Sartre (1985) argues that existentialism is an ideology that renders life possible (p. 23). Existentialists conclude that existence cannot be clarified by explanation alone, as emotions are also important (Sartre, 1985, pp. 60-67). However, dividing philosophers into these two categories is not enough to understand

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existentialism, as there are other philosophers who do not fit into this scheme, for instance Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers stand apart from others, because they are not Christians, and they are not certainly atheists too. Their attitude towards existential philosophy is diverse, and perhaps these philosophers have different opinions about this theory too. The main term ‘existence’ as well as the way they ‘do philosophy’ together forms a common conceptual style that allows one to name them all as existentialists. Most of existentialism’s logical and tragic aspect refers to the fact that existence ends in death; “[i]n any case, as far as the individual is concerned, existence ends in death” (Macquarrie, 1972, p. 17).

No definition can accurately clarify the meaning of existentialism, hence at first, it is said that existentialism reflects on the human condition, existence, thoughts and individual emotions, responsibilities, actions and the human existence in general. Existentialists rely primarily on the human being’s emotional rather than its empirical nature or awareness such as the beliefs, feelings, religion and emotions - freedom, regret, pain, anxiety, guilt, finitude, despair, boredom and alienation, etc. Sceptically, as Jean-Paul Sartre argues, the term ‘existentialism’ is now so loosely applied to so many things that it no longer means anything at all (Macquarrie, 1972, p. 13).

Jean-Paul Sartre complains that the term ‘existentialism’ has to some extent lost its sense. Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, and Martin Heidegger also have rejected the label (Macquarrie, 1972, pp.18-19). The basic features of the philosophizing style concern man/human being rather than nature, in other words, it is not the object but the subject’s philosophy, which is the main

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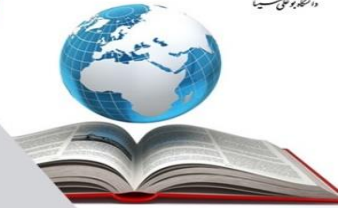
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limitation in existential philosophy, since most existential theories concentrate only on individuals, and its second key concept, which is existence, is also its second feature. The famous statement of Jean-Paul Sartre clearly explains, “[m]an’s Existence precedes his Essence.” That declaration makes it clear that a human being or a man exists first. In other words, man exists in this universe and then creates his substance or being with freedom and he is responsible for his own actions. Later on, this theory was developed by many other thinkers, yet every philosopher focuses on a key concept that is ‘existence’ and especially the ‘existence of the human’ in which all existentialists assume that an individual creates himself, since only humans have the ability to build and organize themselves. Only human being has the ability to constantly transcend his present time and his future, and at the same time, he is responsible for his actions and only he has the freedom to make a decision. This becomes clear in Jean-Paul Sartre’s famous statement that “[m]an is condemned to be free: condemned because he did not create himself yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does” (Sartre, 2003, p. 29).

‘Freedom’ is an essential feature of existential philosophy and a significant component, as human beings are free and fully responsible for the consequences of their thinking and progress. As a human being, man has no choice and is bound to face the consequences of his choice every time he takes a decision. Even when a human being is free to choose a lonely alternative to many others, freedom is all about helping humans make the choice. Therefore, to make a choice and do something does not imply independence. Human beings will seek to do



something; they will strive to achieve the things they desire in their life. Existentialists often claim that once individuals determine which path to take through the help they receive from others, they seem to lack their own decision-making capabilities. Choice is considered a wrong judgment and the detrimental right to determine is considered less favorable. Jean-Paul Sartre (1956) further describes the meaning of equality, and identifies this term as ‘bad faith’ and argues that if a person uses his own freedom to decide, it is called ‘Authentic Existence,’ and if the individual takes outer support, his life is known as ‘Inauthentic Life’ (p. 97).

Existentialism involves three main concepts that underpin its beliefs. The first theme focuses on human importance, and in this case, the major question is what does it mean to live as a human being? The response to this question differs from thinkers to writers, and although most of them agree that individuals should be allowed to determine their freedoms, their thoughts are completely different. The second main theme is about absurdity and meaning, which means that humans do not give life a rational reason or value and there is no sense in the universe except for the importance humans impart to it themselves. What this theme is attempting to say is that anyone can experience anything, which might theoretically bring them into direct confrontation with the absurd, whether it is good or bad. ‘Absurd’ is an expression that has been popular in the history of literature. The act of suicide also refers to the thoughts of the absurd, and it has been said that the probability of suicide made all human beings existentialists. The third and final theme of existentialism is the freedom of choice of the individual. There are no forces that decide who the individual becomes, or what action they take, which means that a person has complete

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freedom to be the person they want to be. However, there comes a great deal of responsibility in that freedom, and a person should learn to embrace this freedom through making responsible and logical choices in order to succeed in life. Together these three core thoughts form what is known as the contemporary existentialist vision.

Existentialism has been a part of society since the late 19th century, during the industrial age. This type of philosophy has three core ideas that demonstrate what it stands for, including meaning and absurdity, the importance of the individual, and the freedom of choice. It stresses human existence, freedom, and the use of that freedom to make the right choices. Existentialism is the search and exploration through life for the real self and true personal sense. Early thinkers and authors like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus used bestselling books, plays, and theatrical texts to spread the ideas of existentialism, and have been very influential in their career, and have been part of the reason for the way it is perceived today. Existentialism has had a significant influence on the way many authors perceive life and it is still being discussed today.

During the difficult years following the Great Depression and World War II, existentialism became ever more popular, and has inspired cinema, theater, and literature, and holds a distinct philosophical viewpoint on life. Existentialism has also had a significant influence on the visual arts during the early 20th century movement of expressionism in Germany. Many expressionist artists have employed aspects of existentialism in their works; moreover, it has had the biggest influence on psychologists in the recent times. While today it is



perspective in treating their patients can make them have a greater sense of absolute freedom.

2.1. Existential Crisis

Existential crisis is characterized as a clash between existential realities and an experienced relationship. The inner conflicts and anxieties that surround human responsibility, freedom, independence, purpose, and commitment are part of existential crisis (Gilliland & James, 1993, p. 89). These existential realities are illustrated through existential therapy and include meaninglessness, death, freedom (responsibility), and isolation. The existential crisis is characterized as a moment in which a person challenges the very basis of his life, and asks if there is some sense, purpose, or meaning to his life (James, 2007, p. 56). The concept of existential crisis is not unique for everyone and has various interpretations. Some authors claim that existential crisis is interpreted as a “limit[ed] situation” in which life is at danger (Turner, 1969, p93-111.; as cited in Yang et al., 2010, p. 59). Facing such a restricted situation will cause a crisis that inevitably becomes existential (Yang et al., 2010, p. 49). The approach demonstrated by Hesletand Frey (1975) confirms that an existential crisis implies, a person cannot completely regulate the personal existence of an unfolding conflict with his own human limits, and thus feels an existential anxiety (as cited in Brown, 1980). Personal fulfillment and progress are part of the other approach that assumes the imbalance between personal and religious areas leads to an existential crisis, and in such a condition, personality is created without any understanding of spiritual meaning (Assagioli, 1973, p. 78).

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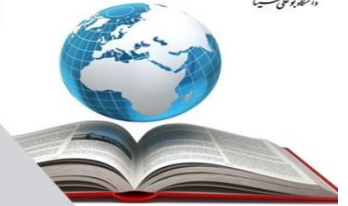
The term ‘existential crisis’ has its origin in the philosophy of existentialism, which reflects on the purpose and meaning of existence from an overall and human viewpoint. Existential crisis is regarded as a process, an understanding, a necessary experience, and a complex phenomenon for existentialists, which emerges from an understanding of one’s own freedom and how at a certain moment life will end for an individual. Existential crisis views life’s essential issues as death, freedom, alienation, and meaninglessness. Such doubts are believed to cause feelings of fear and anxiety because humans can never be confident if their choices are the correct ones, and the option must be discarded after a decision is made. The fundamental issue concerning an existential crisis is whether an individual’s life or existence itself has any pre-existing significance. An existence without meaning is not desirable to many, as people prefer to build meaning if they cannot find it. Such definition comes traditionally from religion; however, currently it may come from community, work, ambition and pleasure, or travel. The fundamental concept is that a person must find their own meaning because the life that precedes them has no inherent value; however, if a person does not find a sense of meaning through this questioning, they may begin to have intense feelings of existential anxiety.

Existential crisis is mostly a product of deeper social issues internalized by people (Hardt & Weeks, 2000, pp.2-10). It is necessary for individuals to overcome each version of existential crises, as they occur in order to prevent negative personal and social consequences. While personal negative feelings include existential depression, anxiety, and relationship problems, negative social consequences include high divorce rates and an excess of unhappy seniors, who

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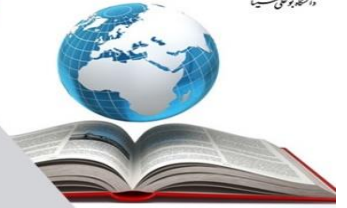
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have not much of a contribution to their societies. Human beings have a certain identity; however, they go through various experiences that can shape it differently. Humans associate with their opinions, emotions, and beliefs, with their situations and with the whole of their experience. Around the same moment, though, humans are mindful of this experience and therefore are far from it. Humans have doubts, dilemmas, and moments of existential and spiritual torment that make them mindful of their own incompleteness and inadequacy. There is a profound lack inside the moment that constricts humans' thoughts and actions. Nothing will completely decide the nature of the universe or the course of the life. Yet humans should go through all that they are and dream of a vision that makes sense of the present. It is by behaving openly toward an end, which does not yet exist, that humans are orienting themselves to this goal and making it possible for themselves. In this way, humans make sense of the universe and add purpose to their life through their active commitments.

Human beings are neither the current static identity nor the intangible potential target; rather, they are constituted by their voluntarily decided relationship between the present identity and the end. Consequently, identity inevitably includes both the facts that define an individual and the transition beyond these facts to what an individual aspires to become. It includes meaning and life, self-possession and self-disposal, introspection and ecstasy, the present and the future, the true and the ideal, the indicative and the conditional. In addition, it includes what is real, and what might be real. In the understanding of Sartre (1956), humans constitute their



personal identities by acknowledging who they are and by going openly beyond that (pp. 80-100).

2.2. Despair

The term ‘despair’ is widely described as absolute desperation revealed within an individual, which is more precisely linked with existential theory to dissolution of one’s identity. In other words, if in a particular circumstance, the human being sacrifices his individuality, the individual is lost to desperation, despondency and will be in a state of despair. The loss of hope, confidence, expectations, and optimism often lead to isolation, depression, anguish, dejection, sadness, and desolation. A person who loses his legs in a road accident, for instance, can become overwhelmed with despair that there is nothing to depend on and become depressed about everything.

Sartre (1946) describes the feeling of despair that arises from the knowledge that there is no sure basis in the universe and that humans will never predict the consequences of their acts in future (p.49). In addition, despair is the anxious reliance on a series of choices that make action feasible (Sartre, 1946, p.56). Sartre (1946) argues that “[i]n fashioning myself, I fashion Man,” which assumes that the behavior of the individual will influence and shape society (p.30). The being utilizes despair to support freedom and take concrete action in complete recognition of any repercussions that might result. Sartre (1946) also defines ‘abandonment’ as the alienation that the atheists experience, since they know that there is no religion to recommend a way of life, no instructions for people on how to live; that they are lost in the sense of being alone in the world



and being the arbiters in their own existence (p.80). Sartre (1946) believes that existentialism is positive and transformative, as it is a theory of behavior and one's self-definition (p. 99).

Sartre (1946) explains that when humans look critically at the probabilistic conditions surrounding their ability to act, they "should act without expectation that things will succeed for them in some way" (p.120). Sartre (1946) explains the Communist argument, which means that existentialism cannot tolerate unity, because people have to rely on others to be successful in their acts (pp. 90-120). However, Sartre (1946) claims, he would depend on people he knows reasonably well and trust to support his aims, it is just that he "cannot count on men whom I do not know based on faith in the goodness of humanity or in man's interest in society's welfare" (p.40). In certain assessments of situations that affect the capacity to act, Sartre (1946) argues, "I must confine myself to what I can see," insisting that this is not a silent philosophy that resigns itself to silence while encouraging others to do all the effort, but quite the opposite: one that believes "reality exists only in action" (p.40).

Despair, on the other hand, is the belief that man must restrict his choices and acts to what he can influence. Choices are decided on the basis of the probabilities available to allow action, as Descartes once pointed out: "Conquer yourself rather than the world," which refers to existentialists behaving without expectation or hope (Daniel, 2007, p.33). It is simpler to say that despair is forever casting out of oblivion, Kierkegaard (2000) claims that when "death is the greatest danger, we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death" (p. 354). Despair's movement is redirecting the self, and with the illusion gone, man is



left to consider himself in faintness, thinking that he was in weakness, human no more despairs of the broken image. Yet, in the first place, man had made himself exposed; therefore, this movement is a higher creation and thus a step closer to redemption.

Kierkegaard (2004) maintains, “despair must be considered primarily within the category of consciousness” (p. 29). While despair is a common illness, most humans are not aware of being in this state. However, while Kierkegaard (2004) tries to keep each unconscious individual accountable for constantly throwing his or her spirit away, he is careful to maintain that all suffering is conscious, even though it cannot be assumed to be self-conscious (p.55). However, it is the extent of self-consciousness of a person, the degree to which he relates to the relationship that shows his sense of spirit; “[c]onsciousness that is self-consciousness is decisive with regard to the self” (Kierkegaard, 2004, p. 29). How self-consciousness, or conflict with despair, intensifies despair is also important. Kierkegaard (2004) argues that “the ever-increasing intensity of despair depends upon the degree of consciousness or is proportionate to its increase (p. 42).

2.3. Alienation

A distinct kind of social disorder is characterized by the idea of alienation; specifically, one requiring a troublesome division between self and the other that properly belongs together. So recognized, it seems to play a largely diagnostic role, possibly demonstrating that with liberal cultures and liberal political ideology, something is awry. Typically, alienation theories select a subset of these troublesome separations as being of special significance, and then include causal

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accounts of the degree of alienation, as perceived, and the prognosis for it. Alienation debates are notably, though not uniquely, correlated with the philosophical practices of Hegelian and Marxist theories.

In the religious meaning, the term 'alienation' refers to the alienation from God; in the biblical sense, it is the sin, however, alienation in existentialism is alienation of one's own self (Macquarrie, 1972, p. 204). Alienation is a prominent aspect that describes existentialism, which essentially means being impassive or withdrawn, or socially isolated from others. It also involves the feeling of separation from society, of spiritual breakdown. A human being may be isolated from society or from the social system and view the society as meaningless and void from other individuals. The deepest alienation is from one's own identity that occurs once man is isolated from society and others to the point that he is drawn up into himself and fails to be connected to others or to his place in society. Society alienates individual from himself to the degree that consumerism and the search for acceptance lead man away from meaningful exploration with his own true self.

One major theme that characterizes existentialism is alienation or estrangement. Alienation is a theme that, on many dimensions and in many subtle ways, Hegel opened up to the modern world. The Absolute is thus alienated from itself, since it only occurs through the creation of the finite spirit through historical time, however, the finite nature, too, lives in isolation from the true consciousness to its own freedom, which the dialectic to history gains only steadily. The alienation that occurs in society also exists: the alienation of particular human

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beings who seek their own interests in estrangement from their society's real hierarchical roles, controlled by the cunning of reason. They do not know, disconnected from the social system, that their wishes are system-determined and system-determining. Moreover, there is the alienation of others who do not agree with their own society's institutions, and who feel their society hollow and pointless. For Hegel (1998), there is also the alienation that grows between the small class of the rich in civil society and the increasing dissatisfaction of the large class of unemployed workers (p.27). In Hegel's (1998) opinion, the most intense alienation of all is the alienation or estrangement between one's consciousness and its objects, in which an individual is mindful of the otherness of the entity and attempts to resolve its alienation in a number of ways by mastering it, or by winning it back in some way (p.29).

According to existentialists, human beings live in isolation from their whole institutions, as they are neither part of it, nor would they ever comprehend the meaning of their existence (Buzinde, 2014, pp. 186-199). Mankind is not familiar with the history of all its existence. Everything depends on faith, not on any logical theory. There is no significant origin to mankind's history as well as to its future, in other words, it is not the past, the present, or the future to which mankind belongs.

Jean-Paul Sartre's influence remains lasting throughout the academic life of twentieth-century France. His creative brilliance, his prolific variety and his inspirational spirit remind the world of the great artists of the Renaissance period; Sartre's uncompromising approach to his times ties him to the social and political enlightenment thinkers. The existential writer Simone de



Beauvoir studies the development of male dominance in the society, from migratory of the hunter-gatherers over the contemporary French revolution.

3. The Second Sex: Woman as the Other

Existential feminists tend to discuss topics of equality, interpersonal interactions, and the human experience. The belief that women are the consequence of cultural and social systems and that women are regarded as ‘other’ has been a starting point for feminism. Moreover, such an approach further discusses how equality can only be obtained through equality for all human beings (Larrabee, 2000, pp.187-188)

Simone de Beauvoir describes the identity of a woman, recognizing that first one must proceed with their gender in order to try to clarify one’s own identity, and believes that sex is the mechanism within which gender is mostly interpreted and defined. Throughout her study, Beauvoir describes where the differences between men and women originate from and what causes have been involved in sustaining women’s subordination of men throughout history. In order to determine her argument, Beauvoir suggests that only in relation to men can women be described. This claim is clarified by a dialectical approach in which, as it is known, culture dominates male ideals, putting men as the universal subject, as a result of which women are othered and described as the object, in compliance with Hegelian logic, the center of equality between the sexes lies within this othering.

“For his own fulfillment, man wants a woman; he finds sexual pleasure, and company in her,” however, in the end, “what she has to give him is important because he has a life outside of



her” (De Beauvoir, 2010, p. 695). By defining the truth of men as transcendent, Beauvoir means that men can be involved, imaginative, productive and powerful, spreading themselves outward without depending on another being. On the other hand, women rely on their husbands for value and meaning of their existence (De Beauvoir, 2010, p. 695). De Beauvoir (2010) defines the experience of women as one of “immanence, a closed — off world where they live only as inert and stagnant, but by men, they cannot leave this domain. They presume the social standing of their husbands, they are shielded and cared for socially, they are persuaded that their irresponsibility is a blessing that should be valued, since they are free from having to figure out anything on their own” (p. 693).

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir (2010) provides a brief background of the role of women, explaining “[t]he world has always belonged to the males,” more to the point, she argues, “[o]ne might expect the French Revolution to have changed woman’s lot. That bourgeois revolution was full of respect for bourgeois institutions and bourgeois values; and it was made almost exclusively by men” (p.180). Beauvoir (2010) goes on to clarify that because of their participation in activities, class women were excluded from competing in events, and because of their caste, many of the active (i.e., bourgeois) class were sentenced to remain separate (pp. 182-184).

Objectification is, “the self as externalized in the form of an object” (Sandford, 2006, p. 65). As a result, women have now become objects for trade, and in order to increase consumerism, women as objects are used strategically to promote and advertise various items as



diverse as vehicles to beauty products. Women can also be bought and sold literally, as an object. Through women's possession and denial of their economic and legal opportunities, they have become a product of exchange from which heirs/workers are made, while the heritage of all men remains intact (De Beauvoir, 2010, p. 93).

Beauvoir's (2010) argument is that what distinguishes a woman is her status as other to a male, and the term 'woman' is defined by her as a representation of the 'slave' (p.644). Accordingly, Broeck (2011) claims that women must be imparted with "a consciousness of the slavish who is in need of being put next to freedom" (p. 178). This illustrates the underlying interest of Beauvoir in arguing that women are treated as an object and thus socially inferior. It means that the misery of women is equivalent to the misery of slaves induced by the persecution of women; as a consequence, it contributes to the internalization of her inferiority and thereby induces a subordinate subjectivity in her. Beauvoir's notion of the case is already beginning to be developed as Broeck (2011) indicates that Beauvoir's rhetoric is "characterizing situations of oppression to the human spirit" (p. 173). Beauvoir (2010) notes that what singularity defines the situation of woman is that being, like all humans an autonomous freedom, she discovers and chooses herself in a world where men force her to assume herself as other (p. 17). Beauvoir (2010) follows Hegel in believing the essential requirement of the group of the other, in which self-consciousness may represent itself, and in contrast to it (p .86). This relationship, Beauvoir (2010) argues, is usually mutual, at least among men, where the other ego often takes the role of the essential subject as opposed to what it builds as the unessential other (p. 230). As Hegel



(1998) contends, self-consciousness exists “in and for itself ... only in being acknowledged,” and if “the other is built as non-essential, this is true because self-consciousness identifies itself in the other (pp. 178-179).

The statement by Beauvoir (2010) that “women are not born but become women” (p.226) can be taken to prove that the female human being has no innate vulnerability that drives her into immanence. However, it does not reveal whether women were compelled to take on their inferior, submissive position by some other outside influence, or whether they consciously chose it. On the one hand, Beauvoir (2010) mentions that women are sovereign over themselves, who are able to make informed decisions and therefore to make themselves the person they need to be (p.622). On the other hand, Beauvoir (2010) claims that a difficult choice between two destinies is given to women, none of which can fulfill their disparate desires, where women seem to be the object of impulses instilled in them in situations beyond their control (p.640).

Beauvoir’s argument reveals the affective emotional patterns of specific political parties, organizations, and ways of being are generated by individuals in conversation, noticeable and irreducible to the workings of systems and institutions themselves. Beauvoir (2010) not only states that emotions of hostility, anxiety and fear precipitate the prevailing male reaction to the human predicament of embodiment and finitude, she further suggests that women, too, consume and reproduce these feelings and behaviors that are imprinted on female bodies, which result in the development of stereotypes and ideologies regarding sexual differences (p. 213). Melancholy, narcissism, fear, guilt, and engagement in romance reinforce patriarchal systems and



philosophies and strengthen them. The individual and collective political agency of women is seriously obstructed, although, theoretically signaling opposition or at least, discontentment with the way things are, will ultimately invite new discussions by the type of the text itself. It unfolds as a political attraction, creating a culture outside the text that encourages readers to develop new subjectivities, new thought, and thereby to create a different future.

Beauvoir (2010) implies that the body is split between the body as a subject for both women and men, a probability of their deliberate behavior and the body as an object, an entity with fixed, defined characteristics for another's gaze (pp.285-286). Men, however, primarily interpret their body as a matter, active and creative, engaged in conscious action with the capacity to overcome the meanings and values with which they are perceived by others. However, for women, the separation takes place at a more basic level, what Beauvoir (2010) considers as a more detrimental level (p. 6).

In the first case, women view their body as an object whose value is determined by others. This is a woman who thinks that her body is a body for others. Her world is still based on the other, usually a man's point of view, and her body and world are no longer the subject of her own ventures, but the center of her attention. The perception of a woman with her body benefits from the acceptance of the gaze. For Sartre (1946), such objectification takes place mostly between individual objects whose system of objectification and rejection of objectification is complex, flowing towards and between them (p.165). However, Beauvoir (2010) considers objectification as a result of the perception of women's bodies in society in general, who become



objects of the patriarchal gaze and, in comparison to their own bodies, women themselves internalize this objective gaze (p.301). Accordingly, how women live the objectivity experience is of utmost importance, and the presence of another that is full of meaning and the internalization of the meaning is at the core of Beauvoir's (2010) account; "[t]his lack of physical power expresses itself as a more general timidity" (p. 355).

This objectification of women is something that within feminist writings has remained a persistent theme and remains important in contemporary culture as well. A woman's image comes from the outside, not from her own concept or sense of self, and influences the way people perceive the society in which they work. One outcome of this insight is that the body of a woman has become a product of today's consumerism today. For Beauvoir (2010), the way women experience themselves as bodies for others, in order to experience their sexuality as a responsibility and an obstacle to self-fulfillment, impacts on the unconscious pre-reflective attachment between bodies and their environment (p.416). For Beauvoir (2010), the body of a woman is not only associated with her choices, but with the possibilities provided by society, and with the choices she sees as possibilities, which are often constrained and considered as the destiny of women (pp. 264–265).

4. Concluding Remarks

Existentialism puts emphasis on human existence. Sartre (1969) believes that the product of disaster is human existence. Humans' life has no sense or purpose other than what they independently make, so they have to rely on their own support. Sartre (1969) believes that in the

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choice of actions, anxiety and freedom of will, life manifests itself. The responsibility of designing one's future is in one's own hands in this sense, however, the future is insecure and so one has no escape from anxiety and despair. Humans are all under the shadow of anxiety; greater transparency results in higher fear. The quest for being leads to a knowledge of nothingness, nothingness to a knowledge of freedom, freedom to bad faith and bad faith. Sartre (1946) claims that existentialism is not pessimism, noting that existentialism is not meant to drown humans into despair, as its primary aim is to prepare them for a genuine existence by anguish, abandonment and desperation, and it is fundamentally concerned with the human experience as a full mode of choice. Therefore, the basic question is the authentic essence of life.

Sartre and Beauvoir have endeavored to support the notion of the self as well as its connection to personal liberation. They have questioned humans' understanding of responsibilities and partnerships together. Beauvoir (2010) describes women as the 'second sex' since it is in relation to men that women are defined. Beauvoir (2010) believes that women are as worthy of decision as men, and should thus choose to step beyond the 'immanence' to which they are historically resigned. Women should attain 'transcendence,' a role in which one assumes responsibility for oneself and the universe, where one chooses one's liberty. Beauvoir (2010) writes that in other categories of identity, such as race, class, and religion, a certain form of hierarchical inequality often existed, however, she concludes that it was no more valid than for gender, in which men stereotyped women and used it as a justification to organize society into a patriarchal system.



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