

# Analyzing the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir\*

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research are: 1) To study the concept of Existentialism. 2) To study the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir. 3) To analyze the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir. It is a documentary research. The data were collected from the relevant sources: primary, secondary and related documents. The collected data were interpreted by the descriptive analysis based on the inductive method.

### The results revealed that:

1. Existentialism serves as a vital philosophical approach that encourages individuals to confront their existence and embrace the freedom and responsibility that come with it. By engaging with existentialist ideas, individuals can cultivate a deeper understanding of themselves and their places in the world, ultimately leading to their more authentic and fulfilling lives.

2. Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy explores ambiguity, freedom, ethics, and human relationships, emphasizing that true freedom is interconnected with the freedom of others. Her work challenges societal views on aging, advocates for gender equality, and highlights our ethical responsibility to others. By distinguishing internal and external freedom, she stresses mutual respect and shared goals for genuine connection. Her ideas remain vital to contemporary debates on social justice and collective liberation.

3. Simone de Beauvoir's existential philosophy intertwines feminism, freedom, and ethical responsibility, challenging oppressive systems and advocating for human agency. She critiques the social construction of gender, exposing how women are

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relegated to The Other and calling for liberation through education, economic independence, and systemic change. Her existentialism emphasizes that freedom is not absolute but a dynamic process requiring mutual recognition and collective responsibility. By navigating human ambiguity and rejecting rigid moral absolutes, Beauvoir offers a framework for social justice, ethical engagement, and the pursuit of meaning in a world devoid of inherent purpose.

**Keywords:** Existentialism; Simone de Beauvoir

## 1. Introduction

Existentialism is one of the most important philosophical branches in the world. There are always two broad sides of philosophy from the past until now, the idealism side and the materialism side. Both always argue to support their own argument. Both claim that they are right and the other must be wrong. The existentialism school believe that both sides can be right and wrong at the same time, because right or wrong does not depend on those subjective or objective standards as it was stated “Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy (Kaufmann, 1956).

Existentialism depends on the situation and who deal with that situation. There is no absolute thing in the world. This idea is very important to the world. The real world is not easy to deal with. It is always complicated for each human being and each circumstance. This idea led to the freedom of every individual to choose to act and to live by realizing their own right and be responsible for their own action. There are a lot of research about the core teaching of existentialism, however there is still less research about female existentialist.

Existentialism has had a significant impact on modern societies and their ideas about reality. Existentialism places the individual in the center and questions their existence in the absence of the first signified. This means that there are only surfaces without depth, and language has no function of conveying meaning to provide communication: “Existentialism is a philosophical movement which focuses on individual existence rejecting the absolute reason. There are some reasons for the appearance of Existentialism in the



history of thought. First of all, rational sciences could not prove that they were absolute, and thus, there was no absolute truth. Next, and the most important cause of the emergence of existentialism was that people had lost their belief in the existence of a divine being that is God, owing to the wars and losses in these wars. Beforehand, God was a reference point". (Tan, 2007) As a result, man has no trustable truth, which will provide a basis for the existentialist in his search for being. This rejection of absolute truth and emphasis on individual existence has influenced various fields such as literature, art, psychology, and sociology.

Studies of existentialism by female philosophers remain limited, particularly in Eastern contexts, including Thailand and Buddhist universities. "It has been the grounding fact that philosophy is a quintessentially male endeavor, and that women thinkers have been thrown up against it, as it were. The demiurge that drives philosophical thought may drive both men and women in roughly equal ratios, but our difficulty is that the historical record for women is small, especially since, until recently, the compilers of that record have almost always been male. Thus, we do not have lengthy written records of the work of women philosophers with which to compare, at least not in easily accessible form, or compiled over a long length of time. As one might expect, several of the thinkers examined here do not appear to have been explicitly aware of their status as female philosophers, and notably, at least two encountered considerable difficulty in addressing the issue at all (Duran, 2006).

As the researcher mentioned above about existentialism focusing on real freedom of human beings. This notion leads to the action of human right. The right for everybody in the world both man and woman. Since there are a lot more researches on male existentialists, it sounds unfair to the woman to get the ideas of equality among both sexes. It may not present well the right of the woman by man. In this research, the researcher sees this problem so the study the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir is indeed necessary to be done.

No one can present the freedom, sexuality, and feminism of the woman better than woman herself. According to the declaration of Human Right that every human has the same right in freedom, sexuality, and equality. So far, those ideas were mostly



presented by man. The current project of retrieving the work of women philosophers is in many ways similar to earlier projects of recovery. In a sense, the work of women philosophers has been buried, literally and metaphorically, and its finding requires both actual excavation and careful archival search.

Other such projects, including those having to do with persons of color or victims of societal transgression, remind us of the importance of salvaging work from the past (Duran, 2006). Women philosophers have tended to focus on areas of philosophy that are related to theory of value. They have written extensively on issues such as ethics, the nature of the religious life, and education. This suggests that women's unique perspectives and experiences have enriched philosophical discourse by bringing attention to topics that may have been overlooked or undervalued in traditional philosophical discourse. Additionally, some women philosophers have shown an awareness of their different social station and this awareness has manifested itself in their writings. Overall, women's contributions to philosophy have broadened the scope of philosophical inquiry and challenged traditional ways of thinking.

Female existentialist perspectives are necessary because they provide a unique and valuable contribution to existentialist philosophy. Existentialism, as a philosophical movement, has traditionally been dominated by male voices, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

Simone De Beauvoir was claimed to be important in philosophical field that "In the past several years there has been a heartening renaissance of philosophical interest in Beauvoir, a flowering that has produced extremely useful work tracing sometimes surprising lines of affinity between her writing and that of her philosophical forebears and contemporaries. Understandably enough, given the decades-old treatment of Beauvoir as, philosophically speaking, nothing more than her partner's mouthpiece, it is the concern of most revisionist considerations of her writing to bring her out from under Sartre's shadow. Such comparisons are not without their interest; indeed, I myself will propose several and dwell on them at some length (Bauer, 2001).

By including and amplifying female voices in existentialism, we enrich the philosophical discourse, challenge existing biases, and promote a more inclusive and



diverse understanding of human existence. This inclusion not only benefits women but also helps us gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human condition as a whole.

Therefore, it's time to hear from the woman about what is equality in man and woman. Simone de Beauvoir is one of the prominent philosophers in her time which the most important existentialist philosophers also lived in that time, too. In her time, existentialism was the best answer to human beings who seeks for the real freedom. In this research, she is the best answer to what is existentialism from the woman thought. It is important to start with what the core teaching in existentialism is. In order to deeply understand the existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir, the researcher have to trace back to its origin. The history of the existentialism and the founders and the most influent existentialists will be also study in detail. The result of this will eventually lead to the existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir. Of course, what happen in her life in that situation will also play important parts in this research. It will be influent her thought gratefully. Her works are important that have to be study in very detail in order to take out what are the existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir.

## 2. Research Objectives

1. To study the concept of Existentialism.
2. To study the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir.
3. To analyze the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir.

## 3. Methods

This is documentary research in line with the qualitative one with emphasis on documents. Its methodology can be divided into three stages as the follows:

1. The data collecting from relevant sources: Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, Existentialism, Feminism, and Simone de Beauvoir, Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings, The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir, The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Ambiguity, Conversion, Resistance, The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir, Existentialism



2. The data analysis: the collected data were analyzed in favor of a descriptive analysis based on the inductive method.
3. The research results in their final form are submitted to the concerned agencies, including conclusions and recommendations.

#### 4. Results

In the research study titled Analyzing the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir, the findings can be concluded into three points according to the objectives as follows:

1. The Concept of Existentialism

Existentialism is not merely a philosophical theory but a way of life that emphasizes the importance of individual experience and personal responsibility. Understanding existentialism equips individuals with the tools to navigate their own lives meaningfully, highlighting the significance of personal choices in a world that often lacks inherent meaning. Existentialism is defined as a philosophical movement that prioritizes human existence, freedom, and individuality. It asserts that individuals must create their own meaning and essence through their actions, rather than relying on external definitions or societal norms. The development of existentialism is rooted in historical contexts, particularly the disillusionment following World War II. This movement emerged as a response to modern challenges, drawing from various disciplines such as literature and psychology, and has evolved to address the complexities of human existence in contemporary society. Prominent existentialists have shaped the movement by exploring themes of freedom, responsibility, and authenticity. Their works provide valuable insights into the human condition and the quest for meaning, illustrating the diverse perspectives within existentialist thought.

The key themes of existentialism, including freedom, alienation, and the search for authenticity, create a framework for understanding the human experience. These themes highlight the existentialist focus on individual agency and the necessity of confronting the inherent uncertainties of life. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of authenticity and freedom closely aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist claim that individuals must create their own meaning through personal choices, emphasizing self-creation and



responsibility (Sartre, 2007). Both philosophers argue that human beings are not born with a fixed essence but must define themselves through action. However, Beauvoir extends Sartre's framework by emphasizing how social, historical, and gender structures significantly influence individual freedom. She argues that women's freedom has been systematically restricted by patriarchal norms, traditions, and institutions, making authentic existence more difficult to achieve. While Sartre's existentialism focuses primarily on individual responsibility in an indifferent universe, Beauvoir integrates social context into the existential project, stressing that true authenticity requires the active transcendence of social and gendered limitations, particularly those imposed on women throughout history (Beauvoir, 1976). In conclusion, existentialism serves as a vital philosophical approach that encourages individuals to confront their existence and embrace the freedom and responsibility that come with it. By engaging with existentialist ideas, individuals can cultivate a deeper understanding of themselves and their places in the world, ultimately leading to each authentic and fulfilling life.

## 2. The Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir

Beauvoir's exploration of ambiguity emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual freedom and the ethical responsibility to affirm the freedom of others. This suggests that true freedom cannot exist in isolation and must be supported by societal conditions that promote collective freedom. Building on this ethical understanding of freedom, Beauvoir's later works shift attention from abstract notions of temporality to the embodied realities of aging and mortality. Through a phenomenological analysis of lived experience, she examines how physical decline and vulnerability affect one's capacity for action and freedom. Rather than viewing aging solely as loss, Beauvoir challenges readers to reconsider the value of human life beyond productivity and physical capability, thereby extending her ethical commitment to recognizing dignity, responsibility, and meaning even in conditions of limitation.

In her analysis of action and justification, Beauvoir raises critical feminist questions about representation and the conditions under which one can speak for another. This highlights the importance of recognizing individual agency and the ethical implications of our actions in relation to others.



Beauvoir's existential inquiries lead to a deeper understanding of freedom as both a personal and collective endeavor. She argues that our relationships with others are fundamental to realizing our own freedom, emphasizing the need for shared goals and mutual respect in the pursuit of a meaningful existence.

The distinction between internal and external freedom underscores the complexity of human relationships. Beauvoir posits that while we cannot directly infringe upon another's inner freedom, our actions and commitments to shared values are crucial for fostering genuine connections and supporting the freedom of others. Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical work intricately weaves together the themes of ambiguity, freedom, ethics, and the complexities of human relationships, emphasizing that true freedom is not an isolated experience but one that is deeply interconnected with the freedom of others. Her exploration of the embodied experience of aging challenges societal perceptions of worth and capability, while her feminist inquiries highlight the ethical responsibilities we hold in representing and advocating for others. By distinguishing between internal and external freedom, Beauvoir underscores the importance of mutual respect and shared goals in fostering genuine connections. Ultimately, her contributions continue to resonate in contemporary discussions on gender equality and social justice, urging us to confront the ethical implications of our actions and the necessity of collective liberation.

### 3. The Analysis the Existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir

Beauvoir's existentialism emphasizes feminism, freedom, responsibility, gender and sexual diversity, women's self-cultivation and ethical engagement in a world devoid of inherent purpose. It explores human ambiguity, interconnectedness, and the ethical need to promote mutual freedom. Her philosophy addresses systems of oppression and advocates reclaiming agency for marginalized groups.

Simone de Beauvoir's feminism centers on freedom, choice, and aims at dismantling oppression. *The Second Sex* exposed gender as a social construct, shaping modern feminist thought. Advocating for autonomy, solidarity, and systemic change, her work continues to inspire gender justice and intersectionality. By challenging patriarchy and affirming women's agency, Beauvoir's legacy remains a vital force in the fight for





gender equality.

Simone de Beauvoir's critique of traditional gender roles in *The Second Sex* provides a philosophical foundation for understanding gender and sexual diversity as socially constructed rather than biologically determined realities (Beauvoir, 2011). By exposing how women have been historically positioned as the "Other," Beauvoir challenges fixed and normative definitions of femininity and sexuality, opening space for diverse expressions of gender identity and lived experience. Central to this project is women's self-cultivation the conscious development of autonomy, agency, and self-definition through education, economic independence, and ethical responsibility (Beauvoir, 1976). Authentic existence, for Beauvoir, requires individuals to transcend imposed roles and actively participate in shaping their own lives within a shared social world. Her existential feminism thus affirms that genuine liberation emerges not only from structural change but also from the cultivation of freedom that respects gender and sexual diversity, fostering mutual recognition and equality among all individuals.

Freedom, in Beauvoir's view, is not absolute but a dynamic and ethical process requiring active engagement with the world. It intertwines with collective responsibility, where true freedom involves mutual recognition and overcoming systems of oppression. Beauvoir critiques the social construction of gender, arguing that traditional roles restrict women's freedom by relegating them to "The Other" She calls for liberation from patriarchal norms through education, economic independence, and dismantling patriarchal structures.

The 'Other' is central to relational existence, representing a dynamic interplay between freedom and mutual recognition. Beauvoir critiques its use to oppress women and marginalized groups, advocating ethical relationships based on respect and shared freedom. Simone de Beauvoir's existential philosophy provides a profound exploration of freedom, ethics, and relational existence, challenging traditional structures of oppression and advocating for human agency. Her concept of existentialism underscores the creation of meaning in a world without inherent purpose, emphasizing the interplay of freedom and responsibility within societal constraints. Through her critique of traditional gender roles, she exposes how societal constructs confine women as "The Other", calling for liberation through education, economic independence, and dismantling oppressive



systems. Her existential ethics advocate for navigating the ambiguities of human existence by fostering mutual recognition, solidarity, and collective freedom, rejecting rigid moral absolutes. Beauvoir's ideas form a compelling framework for understanding individual autonomy and the interconnected nature of human relationships, offering a roadmap for addressing social justice and ethical complexities in modern life.

## 5. Discussion

The first part of this research provides a comprehensive overview of the historical development of gender equality, tracing its progression through several distinct phases that reflect changing social values, political priorities, and cultural contexts. The early phase focused primarily on achieving equal political and legal rights, particularly the right to vote and participate in public life, thereby laying the foundation for later movements toward equality. Subsequent developments expanded the scope of gender equality to address broader social and economic concerns, including equal access to education, fair treatment in the workplace, reproductive autonomy, and the challenge of discriminatory cultural norms. During this period, greater attention was also given to the ways gender inequality intersects with other forms of social disadvantage, such as class, race, and ethnicity.

In the late twentieth century, discussions of gender equality increasingly emphasized diversity, individual experience, and the fluidity of gender identity, moving beyond uniform definitions of equality to acknowledge varied social realities. In more recent years, renewed public attention has focused on persistent inequalities, including sexual violence, wage disparities, and societal pressures shaped by media and technology, reflecting an ongoing commitment to advancing equality in both private and public spheres. The section also highlights the importance of personal experiences, family background, and educational environments in shaping attitudes toward gender equality, illustrating how individual narratives contribute to broader social change. Overall, the historical development of gender equality is presented as a dynamic and evolving process that continues to respond to contemporary challenges, underscoring the enduring need for awareness, responsibility, and collective action in the pursuit of a more just and inclusive society.



This research presents a thorough exploration of the existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir, emphasizing her pivotal role in shaping feminist philosophy and existential thought. It begins with an introduction to her philosophical contributions, particularly focusing on the complexities of human existence and the ethical implications of individual choices. The section delves into Beauvoir's biography, detailing her upbringing in Paris and her intellectual partnership with Jean-Paul Sartre, which informed her work throughout her life. It investigates her rich intellectual background, highlighting her engagement with existentialism and other philosophical influences that shaped her perspective. Key philosophical concepts central to Beauvoir's work, such as "Otherness" and the social construction of gender, are explored, elucidating how she critiques the historical oppression of women and advocates for personal freedom and agency. Furthermore, the section analyzes Beauvoir's significant writings, particularly her groundbreaking work, *The Second Sex*, which remains a foundational text in feminist literature, alongside other notable works that address ethics, aging, and the human condition. It also evaluates her lasting impact on contemporary feminist thought, revealing how her ideas continue to inspire discussions surrounding gender equality and personal autonomy. In conclusion, the section underscores Beauvoir's enduring legacy, presenting her as a crucial figure whose insights continue to provoke critical thought and motivate activism in the ongoing quest for women's rights and social justice.

The feminism as a movement and ideology aimed at achieving gender equality by addressing systemic disparities between men and women, it emphasizes that gender roles are socially constructed rather than biologically predetermined, which allows for an understanding of the pervasive nature of patriarchy, a structure that privileges men and establishes barriers for women and marginalized genders. The section further delves into the concept of intersectionality, acknowledging that various forms of oppression, such as those based on race and class, intersect with gender to create unique experiences of inequality. Additionally, it highlights the evolution of feminist theory into activism, emphasizing the importance of women's agency and autonomy in challenging oppressive societal norms. A focal point of the discussion is the significant contribution of Simone de Beauvoir, particularly her seminal work "*The Second Sex*," which critiques



the historical positioning of women as "the Other" and advocates for their independence and self-definition. By contextualizing these elements within broader social frameworks, the section not only reinforces the importance of feminist discourse in understanding and combating gender-based oppression but also calls for a reconfiguration of societal norms to foster an inclusive and equitable future for all individuals.

The outcome of this research is shaped by several foundational premises and objectives inherent to feminist theory and activism. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of understanding gender as a social construct rather than an inherent biological characteristic. This perspective enables a critical examination of the societal norms and structures that perpetuate inequalities and oppress women, asserting that these roles can be challenged and redefined. Moreover, the acknowledgment of patriarchy as a systemic issue highlights the overarching power dynamics that privilege men while marginalizing women and other gender identities, thus necessitating an exploration of intersectionality. This framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of how various identities, including race, class, and sexuality, interact with gender to shape individuals' experiences of oppression and privilege.

Furthermore, the focus on women's agency and autonomy underscores the need for empowerment and self-definition, advocating for women to actively participate in shaping their lives and societal roles. Simone de Beauvoir's contributions provide a critical lens through which to understand these dynamics, particularly her analysis of "the Other" and the call for liberation from oppressive structures. Overall, the outcome is a comprehensive articulation of feminism's goals: to challenge and dismantle oppressive systems, promote equality, and foster an environment where diverse identities can thrive, thereby contributing to a more just and equitable society for all. This synthesis reflects the ongoing relevance and urgency of feminist discourse in contemporary social movements and discussions around equality.

The result of this research frames existentialism as a practical philosophy, one that challenges individuals to actively engage with their circumstances and define their essence through intentional actions. Solomon's perspective enriches this view by articulating the philosophical underpinnings of existentialism, highlighting the absence of inherent



meaning and the ethical imperative for individuals to create their own purpose. Together, these interpretations illuminate existentialism's enduring relevance, presenting it as a philosophy deeply connected to the lived human experience and the pursuit of authentic existence.

The concept of existentialism as a way of life, as explored in the text, is intrinsically tied to the central tenet of “existence precedes essence” (Solomon, 2005) discussed by Robert C. Solomon and other existentialist philosophers. Both the text and Solomon's work emphasize the individual's role in crafting meaning and identity through personal choices, rejecting the notion of a predetermined essence. This alignment underscores existentialism's core focus on personal responsibility, freedom, and the subjective experience of existence. “The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir”, Card highlights Beauvoir's impact on feminist theory and her exploration of the social construction of gender, which aligns with the conclusion's emphasis on gender equality and the ethical implications of our actions in relation to others. Card (2003) emphasizes Beauvoir's profound influence on feminist theory, particularly her critical examination of the social construction of gender and the ways in which societal norms perpetuate women's oppression. This aligns with the conclusion's focus on gender equality and the ethical responsibilities in representing others, as Beauvoir's work challenges readers to confront and dismantle the patriarchal structures that limit freedom. Card's analysis underscores the necessity of recognizing the interconnectedness of individual experiences, which is a central theme in the conclusion.

Wendy O'Brien and Lester Embree: Their work, *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*, discusses the philosophical underpinnings of Beauvoir's thought, particularly her focus on freedom and the complexities of human relationships. This aligns with the conclusion's focus on the interconnectedness of freedom and the ethical responsibilities we hold towards others. (O'Brien, & Embree, 2001) Their book, “*The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*”, delves into the philosophical foundations of Beauvoir's thought, particularly her exploration of freedom, ambiguity, and the complexities of human relationships. They highlight how Beauvoir's existentialist framework emphasizes the importance of personal agency while also acknowledging the



relational nature of existence. This aligns with the conclusion's assertion that true freedom is contingent upon the ethical treatment of others and the mutual respect necessary for genuine connections. O'Brien and Embree's work reinforces the idea that Beauvoir's philosophy is not only about individual liberation but also about the collective responsibility we share in fostering a just society.

In conclusion, while the struggle for gender equality is a crucial and necessary foundation for advancing social justice, this research suggests that it is not sufficient on its own to achieve a fully just society. Gender equality addresses significant structural inequalities related to power, rights, and representation, particularly as illuminated through Simone de Beauvoir's existential and feminist philosophy. However, social justice requires a broader and more integrated approach that also confronts intersecting forms of oppression related to class, race, sexuality, and other social identities. Beauvoir's emphasis on freedom, responsibility, and the ethical recognition of others demonstrates that justice cannot be realized solely through formal equality or legal reforms, but must also involve transformative changes in social norms, economic conditions, and interpersonal relationships. Existentialism further reinforces this view by framing justice as a lived and ongoing practice rooted in individual agency and collective responsibility. Therefore, gender equality should be understood as an essential component of social justice, but one that must operate alongside wider structural, cultural, and ethical reforms to create an inclusive, equitable, and genuinely just society.

## 6. Suggestions

The existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir offers a rich foundation for further academic exploration, providing invaluable insights into freedom, ethics, and gender dynamics within societal structures. Future research could delve deeper into three compelling areas:

1. Intersectionality in Beauvoir's Existentialism
2. Beauvoir's Impact on Modern Feminist Movements
3. Comparative Study of Existential Ethics



## 7. Knowledge Assets

The core scholarly content of this article lies in its systematic development of existentialist philosophy, with particular emphasis on the thought of Simone de Beauvoir. The study begins by establishing a strong theoretical foundation through an explanation of the central concepts of existentialism, including freedom, responsibility, authenticity, and the principle that existence precedes essence. These concepts provide the philosophical framework necessary for understanding human agency and meaning within existentialist thought.

Building on this foundation, the article advances its analysis through a detailed examination of Beauvoir's existential philosophy. It highlights her original contributions, particularly the concepts of ambiguity, relational freedom, and ethical responsibility, while emphasizing the influence of social and historical conditions on individual agency. Beauvoir's work extends classical existentialism by demonstrating that freedom is not purely individual but deeply shaped by social structures and relationships.

Based on this theoretical development, the article offers a critical feminist analysis that examines the social construction of gender, the positioning of women as “the Other,” and the limitations of purely individualistic notions of freedom. Through this synthesis, the study contributes to existing scholarship by arguing that while gender equality is a necessary foundation, the realization of social justice requires broader structural, ethical, and collective transformations beyond formal equality alone.

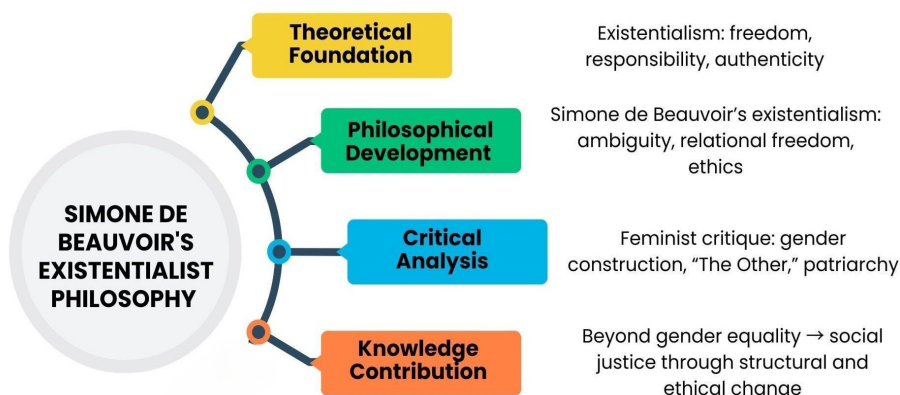


Figure 1 New knowledge



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