

***Freedom and the Human Positioning in the Lifeworld: the  
Transcendence-Immanence Contrast in Simone de Beauvoir's  
Existentialist Feminism***

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**Abstract**

*The pivotal theme of Simone de Beauvoir's magnum opus, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex) is the idea that woman in relation to man has positioned herself secondarily in the lifeworld as the Other of man since the ancient times and further that this secondary position of women in the social order is imposed by the force of the patriarchal atmosphere rather than the feminine characteristics. Women's being so defiant regarding womanhood reflects that their sense of perpetual femininity is haunting to them and they want to get rid of it; and this to Beauvoir is in no way an appropriate attitude of women. In spite of this nominalistic abstractness she directs herself to the existentialist transparency of meaning that in the facticity every human being finds himself or herself a concrete existent always a singular, separate individual. Drawing upon this existentialist notion she first defines the problem of feminism in the nexus of facticity whereby she further expounds how woman being a for-itself (pour-soi) is necessarily related to the in-itself*

*(en-soi) – the world and its past; then she attempts to afford a morality of freedom by virtue of which an autonomous subject can transcend the givenness of facticity projecting her existence beyond that. This paper interprets the details of this argumentation by referring to Beauvoir's addressing the issue of how to reply to the question: What is a woman? And an appropriate answer to this question will lead one to seeking the task of resolving the ultimate problem of her feminist discourse: Why is woman the Other? In this regard the point Beauvoir makes here it is that the Otherness or inferiority of woman is not naturally given or inherently found in the female sex rather it has been the process of historical unfolding that enabled man to treat woman as a secondary being and woman became convinced with that subordinate role of her in the making of the human tradition. The two words that Beauvoir finds most significant for her existentialist-feminist interpretation of the male and the female statures in human tradition are transcendence and immanence. Men have always been free to transcend their limitations in terms of involving themselves in the progressive life projects whereas women have never been so free to act their own in the life projects instead they find themselves imprisoned in their immanence – the overall factual givenness of their being in the world. If woman submits to her immanence, she will do so in bad faith; as she is a free individual who cannot only make herself free from this immanence but she can also project herself through her future endeavours by transcending her facticity.*

*Key Terms: Existentialism, feminism, freedom, transcendence, immanence, lifeworld*

Woman's situation of being the Other of man is, according to Beauvoir, a result of men's chauvinistic attitude throughout History intimidating women so that they have failed to claim a position of human dignity as liberated and independent beings along with men. Since her adolescence, the time when in her mind the idea of individualism was

firmly rooted making her believe that each individual was responsible for securing his own, she had been of the view that if she being a woman had accepted a secondary status in lifeworld as compared to that of man, she would have been a mere parasite degrading her own humanity. She was clearheaded that she was suffering from those problems because she 'happened to be a woman' and she could control the situation if she was to attempt 'qua individual' (*not qua woman*) to resolve it. This justifies her deviation from the nominalistic abstractness of the meaning of womanhood to the existentialist notion of human being that defines him or her as a 'concrete' existent always a singular, separate individual. Her interest in existentialism sets for her the task of resolving the pivotal and ultimate problem of her feminist discourse: 'why is woman the Other?' And she knows that this resolve is not possible until and unless she is able to reply to a more fundamental question: 'What is a woman?' Through that analysis the point she attempts to make it is that woman's existence is a human existence whose socio-historical progress in the lifeworld has to be interpreted in its entirety (rather than with reference to one particular dimension like biological, psychoanalytical or economical etc.). And in this regard she finds existentialism as the most appropriate framework, as it affords us the transcendence from the one-dimensionality of life leading us to the overall human situation which can be explained on the ground of its 'ontological substructure' defined by the nature of human being. Existentialism is for her the only paradigm that can show the most transparent picture of the human life, as it encompasses all categories of defining human life that separately unsatisfactorily attempts to attain the same task in the forms of the biological science, Freudianism and Marxism. As regards the utility of the existentialist framework in order to address the problem of feminism, Beauvoir refers to the transcendence-immanence contrast perspective for the resolution of the perennial issue of women's subordination as the Other of man who has been the superior being in all terms. From the existentialist point of view, what Beauvoir tries to establish regarding woman's defining trait as an existent it is that when she was to accept her biological fate to be a secondary contributor to the socio-economic life she was to do that in bad faith, as she was in fact an existent like man who could transcend that givenness of her being the Other of man. In the face of this facticity of being in bad faith she is very much capable of showing her aptitude as an existent being free to engage in those life projects that could bless her with new frontiers in her future

life. It's all an attempt to get rid of her bad faith as "woman" who could only be a biological being-in-itself; instead she needs to realize that she is a free individual being-for-itself that can improvise the life projects to make her own what she is as an existent. Under the yoke of her being a traditional consciousness shaped through the effective history woman in bad faith accepts her role as a weak, inferior and secondary being-in-itself (which is to say that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman' in the process of effective history); but she always has the aptitude of getting rid of her bad faith by transcending the facticity to realize that she is a being-for-itself who can freely deliberate to develop her own life projects.

### **Defining the Nomenclature of Simone de Beauvoir's Philosophy**

The nomenclature of Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy is defined by her attempt to address lopsidedly the question of woman as the perpetual other in comparison with man in the perspective of Sartre's phenomenological existentialism. One may properly term her philosophy as phenomenological existentialist feminism: feminism as it pivots around the question of woman and phenomenological existentialism as this pivoting takes its place mainly in relation to the composite perspective of phenomenology and existentialism.

### **Life-Experience and the Philosophical Meanings: Phenomenology, Existentialism and Marxism**

Feminism, existentialism and phenomenology all forms of her thought emerge from her life-experiences, and so it becomes an essential trait of her philosophy that it is rooted in her life-practice rather than intertextual reading. In the third volume of her autobiography, *Force of Circumstance*, Beauvoir confesses that even until the postwar scenario of her life in France she 'had no philosophical ambition.' It is the influence of Sartre's specifically of *Being and Nothingness* that she gave care to developing her philosophical insight through her mutual life-praxis with Sartre. Although she does not deny her own influences upon him what she received inversely from him was so stronger and deeper that whatever she perceived about the world with all of its 'problems' and 'their subtlety' was through his presence with her. And this impact of her life-experience with Sartre is so forceful that she directed herself to talking about that phase of her life which was mutually practiced by her and Sartre as such a 'realm' that must not be taken as of theirs mutually but only of Sartre's. She confesses:

“[Sartre] found himself committed to action in a much more radical way than myself. We always discussed his attitudes together, and sometimes I influenced him. But it was through him that these problems, in all their urgency and all their subtlety, presented themselves to me. In this realm, I must talk about him in order to talk about us.”<sup>1</sup>

She recalls her memories about their youth when they found themselves anarchists and so felt themselves close to the Communist version of ‘negativism.’ It seems that it was their youthful romantic longing to Communism rather than a serious thought out philosophical instance, as she explicitly clarifies that they mutually ‘wanted the defeat of capitalism, but not the accession of a socialist society’ which would have possibly ‘deprived’ them of their ‘liberty.’<sup>2</sup> This clarification also reflects that they were more strongly committed to existentialism rather than Marxism, as they were unable to sacrifice their individual freedom for the expected economic betterment of their collective lifeworld. In support of their mutual adherence to the existentialist meaning of individual freedom against their abhorrence to the Marxist meanings of the collective economic betterment, she cites from Sartre’s notebook, the entry on 14 September 1939:

“I am now cured of socialism, if I needed to be cured of it.”<sup>3</sup>

Beauvoir interprets this socialism-liberty contradiction of their thought referring to their existentialist commitment to experiencing *authenticity* of moral life. Under the dictates of circumstances in postwar France they were to become face to face with problems of poverty, injustice and deprivation which determined them to be against capitalistic structure of their social order that might be further suppressing for them. Out of this fear of economic insecurity and social injustice they found Marxist version of socialism to be an urgent solution of those problems.<sup>4</sup> But this urgency of finding solution might damage the continuity of the social order to which they traditionally belonged and in the nexus of which they wished to prosper as creative writers for which the value of liberty was a prerequisite. Liberty and socialism were for them like two horns of a dilemma, and they found themselves hanging between the illusions of the former and the deceptions of the latter. At that point the shield of protection from this forceful attack of these two horns came from the existentialist ethics – ‘the morality of authenticity.’ The circumstances of life force one to submit to the facticities without leaving any room for transcendence; but from the existentialist point of view one’s freedom makes every

action a project of salvaging whatever problems one is facing in life situations. They were not ready to be living with the 'absolute' meanings of facticity – whether socialistic or capitalistic rather they were interested in the 'transitory' spheres of life-experience wherein they 'had to renounce *being* and resolve to *do*.'<sup>5</sup> Being existentialists they rebelled against 'bourgeois humanism' characterized by the reverence of a specific human nature that determines every act of man. Instead of this essentialist approach towards human life and act they appealed to the existentialist creativity of human action based upon man's being condemned to be free. Out of this freedom man does not only accept the given situation subjectively, but he modifies the situation objectively 'by constructing a future in accord with his aspirations.' In this regard the phenomenological intuition would be heuristically significant, as to it everything in the lifeworld is immediately shown as it exists in itself and so an aspirant soul can constitute its own lifeworld freely. But still there is a difference between phenomenology and existentialism as regards how the subjective consciousness relates to the objective world. Phenomenology defines consciousness as consciousness of something, and when it does so it takes the full presence of the world as *noema* being a correlate of *noesis* – immanently the active pole of the transcendental subjectivity. That is to say, it is the pure consciousness or the transcendental subjectivity that constitutes the world immanently within itself in the paradigm of the *noema-noesis* correlates which Husserl terms as the structure of intentionality. As compared to phenomenology the case of existentialism regarding the consciousness-world relationship is a little different. For Sartre, consciousness is similarly defined as consciousness of something but consciousness does not act in the field of fantasy rather within the realm of facticity. This factual consciousness receives impressions as subjective plenitude through perception of the things in the external world. And in doing so this factual subjectivity that cannot transcend itself to posit the world, rather it negates itself for the assertion that the world exists concretely as being-in-itself. Out of this assertion about the concrete world as being-in-itself what consciousness realizes about itself is that it is always of phenomenal world and without this phenomenon consciousness is only a void or an emptiness whereby consciousness implies in its being a non-conscious being 'the nature of which is to be conscious of the nothingness of its being.'<sup>6</sup> This experience of nihilism becomes original of existentialist conception of creative freedom that guarantees authenticity of one's

moral life. Sartre and Beauvoir share the notion of freedom not as autonomy of thinking or doing with certain *a priori* meanings rather the creative freedom – freedom as will to act *ex nihilo*. This affords an absolute guarantee to experiencing the existentialist authenticity of one's moral life. How in their youth Sartre and Beauvoir were to experience it she describes:

“We had no external limitations, no overriding authority, no imposed pattern of existence. We created our own links with the world, and freedom was the very essence of our existence. In our everyday lives we gave it scope by means of an activity which assumed considerable importance for us – private fantasies...We embraced this pursuit all the more zealously since we were both active people by nature, and for the moment living a life of idleness. The comedies, parodies, or fables which we made up had a very specific object: they stopped us from taking ourselves too seriously. Seriousness as such we rejected no less vigorously than Nietzsche did, and for much the same reason: our jokes lightened the world about us by projecting it into the realm of imagination, thus enabling us to keep it at arm's length.”<sup>7</sup>

But from the ethical point of view one should not take this existentialist practice of life as merely nihilistic though this paragraph may reflect such meanings. Sartre and Beauvoir were accused of being quietists or nihilists but they refused to accept such labeling. Beauvoir clarifies that instead of ‘being a quietism or nihilism, Existentialism’ was to define man in terms of action. Although it condemned man ‘to anxiety it did so only insofar as it obliged him to accept responsibilities. The hope it denied him was the idle reliance on anything other than himself; it was an appeal to man's will.’<sup>8</sup> An existentialist does not act in accord with moral principles but in the light of ends. Beauvoir while recalling her memories when she started publishing as a writer and Sartre was contributing to the cinema and the theatre explains this trait of existentialist ethics. She justifies that she and Sartre had always pooled their earnings, and so she was not obliged to bother about her daily expenses. This act of her seems to be against her feminist orientation, as she being a feminist advises women to be independent of their male cohabiters and that independence begins with economic freedom. She explained this attitude appealing to existentialist meanings of morality. She had taken a leave of absence from the University in order that she could focus her reading and writing. She could assure her economic autonomy ‘since if the need arose’ she could always get back to her teaching position in the University. To

her it seemed 'stupid and even criminal' that in order to prove her economic freedom she would sacrifice her precious time that she was spending in her creative work. So in that sense her act might be in aberrance with the principles of feminism but it was in accord with the existentialist commitment with the ends of act that motivate her for that action. Being a writer she found creative writing as a 'demanding task' that motivated her to do plenty of things and she could not afford to spend her time in making money. Thereby she guaranteed her 'moral autonomy' in existentialist sense; 'in the solitude of risks taken, of decisions to be made,' she made her freedom more real than by accommodating herself to 'any money making routine.' For her, her reading and writing were a genuine satisfaction, and as such they freed her 'from the necessity to affirm' herself in any other way.<sup>9</sup> Being authors and thinkers Sartre and Beauvoir deeply related their consciousness to life-experience, and that phenomenological trait of their intellectual orientation was so significant for them that at times they found themselves ready to repudiate the label of existentialism for the sake of their affinity with life-experience. When Beauvoir published her second novel, *Blood of Others* it was an instant success. Critics labeled it an 'Existentialist novel' which was not astonishing, as an affixing of such a label on works of Beauvoir's or of Sartre's was more than obvious. But surprisingly Sartre was to refuse out of irritation to allow Gabriel Marcel to label him with the adjective – existentialist during a discussion which the Cerf publishing house was to organize for Beauvoir's novel. Sartre said abhorrently and Beauvoir shared his irritation: 'My philosophy is a philosophy of existence; I don't even know what Existentialism is.' Beauvoir furthered this abhorrence by adding that she had written that novel long before she had come across with the term – Existentialism. She explained that for that novel her inspirations came from her own 'experience, not from a system',<sup>10</sup> whether philosophical or social.

In the face of their mutual irritation and protest against the epithet – Existentialists – which people were using for them, it became a readymade label available to be put on everything came from their mouths or their pens. After Beauvoir's novel during the course of a few months Sartre published *The Age of Reason* and *The Reprieve*, and gave a lecture – Is Existentialism a Humanism? Beauvoir also gave lectures on her novel and on metaphysics as well as her play – *Les Bouches inutiles* opened for public, and simultaneously the first few numbers of *Les Temps Modernes*<sup>11</sup> also appeared. And so they caused



a sudden uproar in cultural and literary circles of France. They both were pushed out into the limelight: Sartre was vehemently flung into 'the arena of celebrity' while Beauvoir was identified as an 'associate' of his. The newspapers and the magazines discussed their works and thoughts and there appeared gossips about their life and particularly about their cohabitation everywhere. The *paparazzi* started to take their candid shots intrusively and the strangers rushed up to talk to them. They were so much popular that when once Sartre was invited to give a lecture, so many people gathered at the place that they all could not enter the lecture hall, and there was that much rush that some women fainted. This cultural uproar created by their philosophy and literature is what Beauvoir negatively terms as an 'Existentialist offensive.'<sup>12</sup> Beauvoir analyzes how Sartre suddenly turned out to be an existentialist hero in the post World War II France and why he was welcomed as a new ideologist by not only the literary people but by the public and not in only France but the whole world. According to her, the social scenario of the post World War II France happened to be in favour of Sartre's philosophy, as there was a 'remarkable' symmetry between what the public wanted and what Sartre was offering to them. The French middle class, which was the main addressee of Sartre's works, had lost its faith in 'peace' and 'progress' and they felt tiresome due to the permanent givenness of 'unchanging essences.' They needed an ideology which could guide them to surging up these problems without denouncing the traditional meanings they adhered to. Sartre's Existentialism was striving to establish a harmony between the facticity of life and what was morally required in order to transcend the unwanted elements of factual life. Striving for the compatibility between the historicity of life and morality, Existentialism authorized the people 'to accept their transitory condition without renouncing a certain absolute, to face horror and absurdity while still retaining their human dignity, to preserve their individuality.'<sup>13</sup> The people thought that through the Existentialist heuristics they could educate themselves how to surge up their problems and that surging up seemed to be closed to something they dreamed of. But it might be their bad faith under the yoke of which they thought so, as according to Beauvoir Sartre's Existentialism did not offer such heuristics. She saw an 'ambiguity' between what the new ideological recipe was offering and what the people 'were starved for.' She found an element of intellectual seduction in that offer, as the world he was creating in his novels or presenting in his philosophical writings afforded certain

space in the nexus of which man being an individual had to maintain a particular level of morality. They could not accept the Existentialist morality, as it was altogether different from the morality they were practicing in their facticity; and so they rejected Sartre's offer and 'they accused him of sordid realism, of 'miserabilism'.' The moral choice Sartre offered them was grounded upon the freedom that implied tedious responsibilities that might turn 'against their institutions' and 'mores'; it could ruin that lifeworld which they found secure in moral terms. One more element in Sartre's philosophy which might be threatening to the freedom they were practicing as bourgeois was Marxist dialectic; they were dubious about whether it was safe to be marching along the Communists into the new phase of History for which Sartre was inviting them. Beauvoir clearly understood the dubiousness of attitude of those came to Sartre for ideological guidance and their half-hearted attachment with Existentialism and Sartre's apparent influence that could not be penetrated into that culture. She judges:

"In Sartre, the bourgeois recognized themselves without consenting to the self-transcendence he exemplified; he was speaking their language, and using it to tell them things they did want to hear. They came to him, and came back to him, because he was asking the questions that they were asking themselves; they ran because his answers shocked them."<sup>14</sup>

Sartre found himself 'a celebrity and a scandal' simultaneously, and this simultaneity loaded with a huge fame was absolutely unexpected for him and it did not in any way match with what he being a writer had ever dreamed of. Beauvoir reports about Sartre that he considered literature divine, sacred and eternal, and this eternity lied in its being alien and misunderstood in its facticity and in its transcendence of the epoch in which it was created to be properly understood and admired in the future. Sartre imaginatively aligned himself with great geni like Baudelaire, Stendhal or Kafka whose works did not reach more than a very small group of admirers in their lifetime; but the meanings they created were to transcend that facticity to become eternal in their impact when in the coming generations they found a hugely wider audience to appreciate them. Sartre's becoming a scandalous celebrity in a younger age robbed him of that fateful solitude necessarily belonged to a genius and which had to be transcended by the future generations interpreting the meanings with the due attention. This loss of eternity of meanings for Sartre, estimates Beauvoir, 'was truly the

death of God, who up till then had survived under the mask of words.<sup>15</sup> This was completely catastrophic for Sartre but for Beauvoir while in this regard she compared herself with him it was not so horrible, as she had never believed in the divinity or eternity of literature. She explained that for her 'God had died' when she was fourteen and then nothing (even literature) 'had replaced him.' She appeared to be more intense existentialist than Sartre, as she experienced the meaning of the death of God in her teens while Sartre had to be matured enough to experience the same. Besides this for Sartre the absolute or the sacred was reincarnated in the form of literature whereas for Beauvoir 'the absolute existed only in the negative, like a horizon forever lost in view.' She confesses that she had a fantasy of becoming a legend like Emily Bronte or Gorge Elliot, but this fantasy was absolutely mundane without even any traces of divinity, as she was 'firmly convinced' that once she died nothing would exist to embrace such fantasies. She wished to succeed as a writer in her lifetime, she 'wanted to be widely read,' 'to be esteemed, to be loved,' as she believed that once she closed her eyes all meanings would perish with the age she lived in.<sup>16</sup> If seen from existentialist point of view, Beauvoir appeared to be more contented both as a writer and as a social being; and she was less deceived than Sartre 'by the illusion of being,' for she 'had paid the price of this renunciation during' her adolescence. Being a true existentialist she was more able than he to enjoy 'the transitory,' 'the immediate' – like 'the pleasures of the body, the feel of the weather, walks, friendships, gossips, learning, seeing.' Sartre was saturated by his fame as a scandalous celebrity and by his success as a writer, but she was able to be everlastingly unsaturated by success and she could infinitely enlarge the horizon of her hopes as an ever prosperous writer. She explicitly declared that she might be 'satisfied' as a creative writer but never 'satiated.'<sup>17</sup> That was the genuine form of existentialist freedom or liberation that one could experience with that much richness and depth in such explicit terms.

For them the most suitable practical social framework for exercising such a form of freedom was democracy to which they felt adherence, but the complementary part of that social structure was socialism to which they hitherto felt abhorrence due to their fear of being lost in the collectivity having deprived of their individuality. But in any case they hitherto saw both democracy and socialism as humanity's only chance

of giving rise to social justice and as a necessary condition of their own fulfillment.

In spite of this intellectual confusion of identifying themselves as half Marxist and half petite bourgeoisie, both Sartre and Beauvoir convincingly found certain notions of phenomenology and existentialism as absolutely meaningful for human lifeworld like 'the concepts of negativity, of interiority, of existence and of freedom elaborated in *Being and Nothingness*.' Like socialist-democrat they knew the significance of the idea of *praxis* in human life, but they were not ready to abandon their commitment with the existentialist ethics or the morality of authenticity in life. This phenomenological-existentialist meaningfulness primordially defined the mold of their existence on the ground of which they later chose to be Marxist or petite bourgeoisie or both simultaneously. They tore the element of 'humanism from the clutches of the bourgeoisie' and sincerely tried to make it a value for the Marxists. In Beauvoir's words, it was an attempt 'to bridge the gap between the intellectual *petite bourgeoisie* and the Communist intellectuals.'<sup>18</sup>

### **Life-Experience and the Philosophical Meanings: Feminism<sup>19</sup>**

As I mentioned above of Beauvoir's belief that her version of phenomenological existentialism is not a matter of intertextual study rather of reflection on experience while interacting with friends, people, ideas etc. in one's lifeworld; in her case the most important life-experience in this respect is her life-long companionship with Sartre. Being a genuine phenomenologist she is convinced with the view that the philosophical meanings whatsoever one comes across with should not be separated from one's life-experience. Like phenomenology, existentialism and Marxism her notion of feminism can also be traced back in the nexus of her relationship with Sartre. The pivotal theme of Beauvoir's magnum opus, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*) is the idea that women in relation to men have placed secondarily in the lifeworld since the ancient times and further that this secondary position of women in the social order is imposed by the force of the patriarchal atmosphere rather than the feminine characteristics. She argues that this situation is a result of men's chauvinistic attitude throughout History intimidating women so that they have failed to claim a position of human dignity as liberated and independent beings along with men. Although she wrote that book when she was a mature

woman (the year of publication was 1949) the idea had been there in her mind since she was in her early twenties.

In *The Prime of Life*, she recalls her memories of those days when she was struggling to become a writer and she had to begin her career as an independent individual not only socially and economically but intellectually as well. She quarreled with her childhood friend, Herbaud who accused her of having betrayed that notion of 'individualism' which had previously won her his esteem; and he then did not only condemn her for that betrayal but also broke off their childhood friendship. In the mean Sartre was also to show his anxiety that he felt about her. He told her that she not only 'used to be full of little ideas' which was jeopardizing for her as a budding writer; he also warned her that she under the yoke of that orientation might become a 'female introvert' possibly leading her to turning into 'a mere housewife' rather than a creative writer. Reacting to that anxious feeling of Sartre's and accusation of Herbaud's, she confesses that she was not 'a militant feminist,' as she 'had no theories concerning the rights and duties of women.' As during her adolescence she 'had refused to be labeled "a child,"' so then during her youth she did not think of herself 'as "a woman."' She explains that she had been reluctant to have 'the notion of salvation' in her mind since it lost 'the belief in God' while she was only fourteen. This was the time when in her mind the idea of individualism was firmly rooted making her believe that 'each individual was responsible for securing his own.' She furthers that being a woman if she had accepted 'a secondary status' in lifeworld as compared to that of man, she would have been a mere parasite degrading her own humanity. She was clearheaded that she was suffering from those problems because she 'happened to be a woman' and she could control the situation if she was to attempt 'qua individual' (*not qua woman*) to resolve it.<sup>20</sup>

The phrase 'qua individual' needs here to be explained further referring to Beauvoir's theorizing concerning feminism. This phrase may afford some space to be occupied by the meaning of 'nominalism' which she renounces, for she finds it disproportionate regarding her notion of feminism lopsidedly defined by existentialist phenomenology. In *The Second Sex*, she begins her feminist theorizing by putting to criticism certain nominalistic remarks by Dorothy Parker: "I cannot be just to books which treat of woman as woman....My idea is that all of us, men as well as women, should be regarded as human beings." According to Beauvoir, it is an 'inadequate doctrine,' as the

antifeminists can easily falsify it by showing that 'women simply *are not* men.' It is more than evident that 'humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different' and this truth demonstrates itself to one in one's everydayness without investing one's intellect. Woman's repudiating her eternal femininity is to Beauvoir like a Jew's denying his Jewishness or a Negro's denying his Negritude that cannot liberate a woman or a Jew or Negro to surge up, rather an escape from reality. So women's being defiant regarding womanhood reflects that their sense of perpetual femininity is haunting to them and they want to get rid of it; and this to Beauvoir is in no way an appropriate attitude of women. In spite of this nominalistic abstractness she directs herself to the existentialistic clear-headedness that in the facticity every human being finds himself or herself a 'concrete' existent 'always a singular, separate individual.'

Being a true existentialist Beauvoir first define the problem of feminism in the nexus of facticity whereby she expounds how woman being a For-itself is necessarily related to the In-itself – the world and its past; then she attempts to afford a morality of freedom by virtue of which an autonomous subject can transcend the given projecting her existence beyond the facticity. Drawing upon Lévinas's idea of Otherness,<sup>21</sup> Beauvoir defines feminine as the Other of the masculine. The humanity is compartmentalized in the masculine, the male and the feminine, the female; and the former being the self-sufficient subject, the autonomous and the essential defines the latter as the object, the incidental and the inessential – the Other. This meaning of the Otherness of woman's being contains certain connotations of the secondariness, the inferiority and the humility, and so the meaningfulness of the Otherness absolutely remains one-sided in its effect which is to say that it is only woman that is the Other of man not the vice versa. The negligence of the element of relativity that is obvious in one's considering somebody as an Other contributes to the humility of the feminine, as for Beauvoir 'the other consciousness, the other ego, sets up a reciprocal claim.' For every native a foreigner is a stranger, an Other, but when a native is to travel abroad he finds that the natives of the country he is traveling consider him a stranger, a foreigner, an Other; and so a native's experience of being regarded as an Other by the Others forces him to realize the reciprocity of the meaning of Otherness. Beauvoir tempts to let women be aware of their collective deprivation of the sensibility of this reciprocity in the

meaning of Otherness; this sensibility is the key to understand that it is the chauvinism and the sovereignty of the masculine that he absolutely defines himself as the One, the subject, the essential forcing the feminine to submit to be the Other, the object, the inessential. Beauvoir's feminism tasks to convince women to renounce this submissive attitude to be the Other, the object, the inessential and to attempt to regain the status of being the One, the subject, the essential. 'Whence comes this submission' of the feminine? While seeking the answer to this question, Beauvoir compares women as a class of individuals with other such classes of the submissive individuals exemplified in the nexus of History and culture. Such classes include the American Negroes, the Jews, the Proletarians and the Colonized nations suppressed to be the Other by the American racist Whites, the Nazis, the Bourgeois and the Imperialists respectively. But the case of women is the worst among all. The Negroes said "We" as the subject, the One, the essential when they struggled for their constitutional rights in America. The Jews said "We" while convincing the whole world that they were subject to the extreme suppression by the Nazis and so they translated the word Nazi into an abusive term. The Proletarians said "We" while revolutionizing certain nations by eliminating the bourgeois regimes. And the Colonized nations said "We" when they finally dragged the Imperialist forces out of their homelands. 'But women do not say "We," complains Beauvoir, 'men say "women," and women use the same word [as a term of objectification] in referring to themselves.' By not saying "We" women show that they are unable to 'authentically assume a subjective attitude.' They do not will to assert in order to regain the status of the One, the essential, the subject rather they are satisfied with gaining only what men are willing to grant; 'they have taken nothing, they have only received' from men. 'The reason of this,' explains Beauvoir, "is that women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the Proletariat. They are not even promiscuously herded together in the way that creates community feeling among the American Negroes, the ghetto Jews, the workers of Saint-Denis, or the factory hands of Renault. They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and the social standing to certain men – fathers or husbands – more firmly than they are to other women. If they belong to the

bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with men of that class, not with proletarian women; if they are white, their allegiance is to white men, not to Negro women. The proletariat can propose to massacre the ruling class, and a sufficiently fanatical Jew or Negro might dream of getting sole possession of the atomic bomb and making humanity wholly Jewish or black; but women cannot even dream of exterminating the males.”

Why women, as compared to the Negroes, the Jews, or the proletarians, are unable to unite themselves against their oppressors, men. The nature of bond, according to Beauvoir, that unites women to men is unique and so transcending all other bonds between the oppressed and the oppressors. The women-men sexual divide is not an historical event, but rather ‘a biological fact.’ The masculine and the feminine ‘stand opposed within a primordial *Mitsein*,’ and the latter is unable to break with it. The man-woman espousing is the fundamental institutional act that webs the whole lifeworld as a unit and then keep it so intact; thereby splitting a social order ‘along the line of sex is impossible.’ This natural mutuality of man and woman genuinely defines the mutual Otherness between them that both are the One and the Other simultaneously ‘in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another.’ Out of this reciprocity women should have asserted to be a free individual – the one, the subject, the essential, but men distorting the meaning of man-woman mutuality parenthesized them as the object of fulfilling their sexual need and the desire of offspring. So women remain failure in safeguarding their social emancipation through man’s dependence on them rather that dependence makes the male define the female as an object of satisfaction whose readiness for the coupling is determined not by her but by the male appetite. As a result of this fruitlessness of the reciprocity of the Otherness, ‘the two sexes have never shared the world in equality.’ The burden of this fruitlessness or failure is not only on the male chauvinism but rather equally on the female potentiality to act as an accomplice in the process of parenthesizing herself as the Other. If women had raised her voice against that suppression, they would have faced the loss of ‘the material protection’ provided by men. So in a bad faith she is contented to be an inauthentic existent remaining incapable of showing the moral urge of transcending that facticity of being ‘the creature of another’s will,’ though she may be frustrated to be a ‘passive, lost and ruined’ self ‘deprived of every value.’ Thus, concludes Beauvoir, woman has failed



to lay claim to be the subject, the One preferring to play the role of the object, the Other because of her being short of 'definite resources' that leads her to feeling contentment and pleasure with 'the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity.'

Beauvoir condemns in this regard the process of history and tradition that has made woman deprive in absolute term of the urge of transcending the state of the secondary being. It has been the process of the millennia that men – 'legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists' – have firmly been struggling to establish that 'the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth.' The religions, philosophies, sciences and arts all have been contributing to this menace characterized by the unjustifiable male domination and female subordination. The female consciousness as an outcome of this traditional process is effected to be an historical consciousness ascribed with the meanings of inferiority and humility. But for Beauvoir all these meanings are prejudiced<sup>22</sup> and biased attempting lopsidedly to convince woman to feel contented with the stagnant and static life. The key to rejection of this notion is the existentialist ethics – the view that man/woman is condemned to be free and he/she has to play his/her role in life by projecting freely his/herself through the mode of transcendence. One may genuinely experience the real meaning of freedom through a 'continual reaching out toward other liberties.' And if in that process of the projecting and surging up of the for-itself there arises any 'degradation of existence' coming across with the in-itself and if so one finds threat to one's freedom owing to an existential downfall that 'spells frustration and oppression,' then 'it will be an absolute evil.' In order to assert the authenticity of one's existence one has to transcend the stagnation of the facticity by engaging oneself in 'freely chosen projects.' If one undertakes the particular situation of woman as an individual in the perspective of the existentialist ethics one may propose that she has to transcend her stabilizing and static role as the Other, the object, the inessential ascribed to her by men through history. The transcendence is possible if she in good faith freely engages herself in projecting life beyond these false meanings attributed to her by men and that have overshadowed the real meanings of hers existence as the subject, the One, the essential.

### **Beauvoir's Concept of Woman in the Nexus of Existentialist Feminism**

'What is a woman?' – This is the first major question Beauvoir poses while setting out the discourse of existentialist feminism. And an appropriate answer to this question will lead one, as she believes so, to seeking the task of resolving the pivotal and ultimate problem of her feminist discourse: 'why is woman the Other?' To the former question the first answer that she discusses in detail is biological in orientation. The answer is: Woman 'is a womb, an ovary; she is a female.'<sup>23</sup> The word female loaded with the biological significance has been used throughout history by man that symbolizes an outrageous attitude towards woman. But using that derogatory epithet for woman as an animal, man forgets his own animal traits that make him 'male.' In his own case, the word – male with all its biological connotations shows instead of derogation the meaning of pride. Being a phenomenological-existentialist Beauvoir is not supposed to make an appeal to the naturalistic definition of woman, and so she seems to be obviously not interested in how much the biological science is informed about the nature of woman if she has to define the term in accord with her intellectual inclination. Her long survey of the biological data in this regard is undertaken only to show that this huge corpus of information ultimately remains insufficient to conceive of woman contentedly. Under the influence of Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, she directs herself in order to grasp the meaning of femininity to the biological, or physiological or bodily characteristics of woman. For, Heidegger conceives of man as a being-in-the-world and to be there in the world 'implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view toward this world.' In the face of this bodily presence in the world, man is not supposed to gauge existence in the nexus of his sexuality, as nothing requires in this respect that the human body has 'this or that particular structure.' Instead of a particular bodily structure, 'the real nature of man' in terms of his relation to himself and to the world is defined by the phenomenon of death. Heidegger admits the finiteness of Being as it is 'bound up with death' but simultaneously he does not deny the 'unlimited' nature of human existence as a temporal development in the openness of future. The death makes man's life finite but before that he projects life through time creating behind him the infinite past and before him the unlimited future; and in this perpetual progress of human species man and woman both take part as correlatives and so

this 'perpetuation of the species does not necessitate sexual differentiation.'<sup>24</sup> Besides this she incorporates Merleau-Ponty's dictum that 'man is not a natural species: he is a historical idea.' In this Heidegger-Sartre-Merleau-Ponty perspective human body is conceived in the nexus of situation; for them human body 'is the instrument of our grasp upon the world, a limiting factor for our projects.' As a matter of fact since woman is bodily weaker than man, her grasp upon the world is more limited, and therefore she cannot invest the bodily efforts to accomplish the projects of life with such firmness and steadiness as man can show in seeking his tasks. These facts concerning the bodily traits of man and woman are undeniable but Beauvoir thinks that the biological level is not significant for gauging one's capability of accomplishing life projects. The concept of human strength or weakness 'can be defined only with reference to existentialist, economic, and moral considerations.' That is to say, in the animal kingdom it is a fact that the male more strongly asserts his individual existence than the female counterpart, but particularly 'in the human species individual "possibilities" depend upon the economic and social situations.'<sup>25</sup>

For Beauvoir like biology the model of psychoanalysis developed by Freud and Adler etc. is also not a sufficiently appropriate paradigm for defining woman. She expresses her interest in psychoanalysis, as it offers a perspective of conceiving human self on the substantial ground of sexuality; but her interest soon shows discontentedness, for the psychoanalysts assume sexuality to be irreducible or ultimate as a nexus of interpreting the self. She also has objections on the psychoanalysts' ensuring continuity and coherence in their choices of terms. The diction of psychoanalysis (terms like complex, tendency, unconscious etc.) reflects an attempt of interiorizing the self discarding it from the world whereas Beauvoir, being a phenomenologist, considers it the only field of human experiences. For her, human self asserts itself with all of its aims and projects in the nexus of the lifeworld it belongs to; and this is an experience of exteriorizing the self rather than interiorizing it as suggested in the psychoanalytic diction. According to Beauvoir, the most significant determinate challenge posed by psychoanalysis is its apparent incapacity to deal with man's volitional experience, since it directs the human self to be contented with 'normality' defined by its bodily or sexual existence. In this regard, a subject appears to be psychologically ill if it remains unable to show its normal growth in accord with its sexual tendencies;

which may lead it to experiencing an inauthentic *normal* life rather than an authentic *moral* life guaranteed by freedom. For Beauvoir, sexuality is only one of the many traits of human existence and the psychoanalysts' attempt of reducing all of the realities to sexuality is not justifiable. In existentialist terms this orientation of psychoanalysis leads a subject to experiencing one dimensional psychic reality ultimately but inauthentically determined by sexuality whereas the subject's existence is authentically defined by an absolute freedom that gives it a responsibility of projecting itself in the manifoldness of the lifeworld it belongs to. The case of defining woman in the perspective of psychoanalysis is more problematic. The psychoanalysts define man as a standard human being in relation to which one may interpret the female being as its other in that when she acts like a human being her actions are not her own rather she merely imitates the male. The psychoanalytic focus on virility as the ultimate source of human assertion makes the male a super-human and the female a sub-human<sup>26</sup>, as the latter is devoid of the virile power.

As we have seen above in case of two different perspectives for defining woman that Beauvoir, although does not reject them out right, shows her interest only partially in undertaking these frameworks as useful in this regard, the same is the case with the point of view of historical materialism as expounded by Marx and Engels. She again views this paradigm as well having limited scope for the task of defining woman aptly that she finds in the other two perspectives. What she appreciates about historical materialism is its contribution to bringing forth two truths regarding human world: first, humanity is a 'historical reality' rather than anything else like a biological species or spirit etc.; and second, 'human society is an antiphrasis' in the sense that man defines his relation to nature antagonistically, as he arrogantly makes attempt to control it not merely subjectively in his ideas but rather objectively in his extraneous acts. Simultaneously she exposes the limitations of historical materialism as a perspective for defining woman criticizing the Marxist emphasis on the abstracted connotation of man's being '*Homo æconomicus*' that can only project itself through the categories of proletarian and bourgeois which remain, Beauvoir believes, inadequate to aptly conceive of woman.

Throughout the discussion concerning the various perspectives – namely biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism – what Beauvoir significantly discovers it is that in each paradigm man appears to be a primary being while woman the Other of man, the

secondary being. The Otherness of woman is not merely a difference rather it shows a hierarchical relationship between two regions of being so that the male always a first order being and the female a second order existent. The reason behind this permanence of meaning of woman's inferiority shared among all of the perspectives used by Beauvoir for defining woman it is that every discourse of knowledge whether it is scientific or philosophical emerges and propagates in the sphere of culture and history already practiced by man with the heuristics of values. If one interprets this with reference to Gadamer's phenomenology one may say that it is the effective-history that gives rise to consciousness whose progress is guaranteed by the prejudices of tradition the consciousness belongs to. Situated in ever developing sphere of tradition, consciousness adopts the prejudged meanings already available in the society and so in case of each contribution it makes to the propagation of knowledge one finds the meanings overshadowed by those prejudices. Biologist, psychoanalyst and historical materialist – all finds themselves situated within a living continuity of effective-history taking for granted all prejudged meanings (for instance, the male supremacy or the female inferiority) already prevailing in the society. Whatever contribution they make to the development of biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism is coloured by the traditional prejudices. The point Beauvoir makes here it is that the Otherness or inferiority of woman is not naturally given or inherently found in the female sex rather it has been the process of historical unfolding that enabled man to treat women as a secondary being and women became convinced with that subordinate role of her in the making of human tradition.

The two words that Beauvoir finds most significant for phenomenological- existentialist interpretation of the male and the female statures in human tradition are *transcendence* and *immanence*. Men have always been free to transcend their natural or biological limitations in terms of involving themselves in the progressive life projects whereas women have never been so free to act their own in life projects rather they find themselves imprisoned in their immanence – the overall factual givenness of their being in the world.

If an anthropologist or ethnographer traces the human history back to its outset the most original or primitive form of human society he may discover is that of the Nomads. The nomadic culture was defined by the man-woman balance in terms of their productive and reproductive contributions in the development of nomadic life form. Men's job was

to face the terrors of the natural world outside home through engaging themselves in works like hunting, fishing etc. to earn life not only for themselves but for their female fellows as well. This struggle against the hostilities of natural world made man create new methods and procedures to attain their tasks more affectively and safely. He invented weapons and instruments like for instance club to negotiate the nature in a more productive way than doing the same with their empty hands. The induction of instrumentality in the mechanism of man's efforts to deal with the hardships he faced in his relationship to nature shows the nomadic man's ability to transcend the givenness of his facticity to make his life better through the projects he designed with the sensibility of improving the whole life-form he belonged to. This ability of transcending the facticity was missing in case of the nomadic women's both productive and reproductive contributions that she made to their social life. As far as her productive contribution to the society is concerned she did many jobs like making pottery, weaving and gardening etc. but each of her works was of domestic nature devoid of any sense of struggle against the massive force of nature on account of which perhaps she did not call on for any inspiration to improve the situation. On the reproductive front, the situation of woman is no different. Although her role as a bearer of the human species was very generous, the process of pregnancy and child birth caused unproductive elements in socio-economic life. On the one hand, 'the extravagant fertility of woman prevented her from active participation' in the generation of resources; on the other, if her fertility caused too many new born children it affects economy negatively, 'as the meager products from the soil and those' attained through man's efforts (hunting, fishing etc.) could not be sufficient to meet the challenge of their survival. Thereby, the nomads used to kill those newborn that they could not afford to feed; and it is not only infanticide which was common among the nomads they also left their newborn apathetically who later died from lack of due care. So the woman had a feel of uselessness and loss as regards her reproductive contribution to the nomadic society, for the social forces wasted her painful and creative efforts in order to perpetuate the human species on account of which found no sense of pride in concretizing that great task. That feel of uselessness and loss caused a huge anguish in woman's psyche and she experienced nothingness as an outcome of her jobs that she did for the society. The pregnancy and child birth were simply found by her as biological functions rather than useful works that could

make any positive contribution to the society. It was an experience of having no life projects in order to assert herself as an individual who could transcend her facticity defined by the burden of anguish; and the only way she found at that moment was to submit 'passively to her biological fate.' Her passive submission to the biological fate and the growing insignificance of her domestic jobs perpetuated for centuries and that reiteration of that passive behaviour and anguish made woman imprison herself 'in repetition and immanence.'<sup>27</sup>

Beauvoir, while defining man's supremacy and woman's Otherness in terms of the meanings of transcendence and immanence, compares the male and the female attitudes rather than aptitudes in relation to their contribution in the making of human history. When man stood up to the hostilities of nature, it was not only to invent new methods to deal with the huge antagonistic force, instead he created new lifeworld of his own in the process of dealing with the naturally given world. In this struggle against nature 'he put his power to the test; he set up goals and opened up roads toward them; in brief, he found self-realization as an existent.' Once he created the lifeworld he then maintained it as well; and through the process of centuries he has been perpetuating and continuously improving it. Thus, his efforts have never been restricted to 'conserve the given world;' he has broken through its frontiers, he has laid down the foundations of a new future.' This continuity of man's assurance to the perpetuation of life through his acts of existentially transcending the same life was to guarantee the project of value formation. Man's attempt of being face to face with the hostilities of nature, his creation of new instruments, his inventions of new methods, his shaping the future made him set himself up as a 'sovereign' existent who being a free individual had to have his own set of values. Therefore, his ability to transcend the given that he faced as an individual who was condemned to be free set his aptitude to challenge the present and to create the new future. This tendency of transcending the given is something that woman was deprived of not due to her aptitude as an individual existent rather her attitude determined by not only her own biological make up but the extraneous forces that suppressed her to be submitting to her biological fate. Beauvoir's being certain regarding woman's aptitude of transcending the given lies in her being an accomplice of man in all of his achievements as an individual existent. Man was like a mirror to woman, as she identified herself as an individual existent in comparison with man; like him she felt an urge of transcending the

given facticity going beyond the reiteration of life experience to attain the task of finding new future. According to Beauvoir, 'in her heart of hearts she finds confirmation of the masculine pretensions. She joins the men in the festivals that celebrate the success and the victories of the males.'<sup>28</sup>

From the existentialist point of view, what Beauvoir tries to establish regarding woman's aptitude of being an existent it is that when she was to accept her biological fate to be a secondary contributor to the socio-economic life she was to do that in bad faith, as she was in fact an existent like man who could transcend that givenness of her being the Other of man. In the face of this facticity of being in bad faith she is very much capable of showing her aptitude as an existent being free to engage in those life projects that could bless her with new frontiers in her future life. It's all an attempt to get rid of her bad faith as "woman" who could only be a biological being-in-itself; instead she needs to realize that she is a free individual being-for-itself that can improvise the life projects to make her own what she is as an existent. Under the yoke of her being a traditional consciousness shaped through the effective history woman in bad faith accepts her role as a weak, inferior and secondary being-in-itself (which is to say that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman'<sup>29</sup> in the process of effective history); but she always has the aptitude of getting rid of her bad faith by transcending the facticity to realize that she is a being-for-itself who can freely deliberate to develop her own life projects. This reminds us of Sartre's notion of the absolute individuality that he ascribes to man's being-for-itself while drawing parallels between the divine and the human freedom. According to him, man as an individual is to make of himself whatever he wills to be, which is to say, man's being is what he 'chooses to be.' Making this choice, man is helped neither by his inner essence, as he has none nor by any extraneous source like God, as he has already become what he has made of himself without the Divine help.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to Gadamer's notion of effective history that gives rise to human consciousness and act, this explains the existentialist instance on the original of human act while man is 'condemned to be free' as an existent. It reflects that history cannot 'produce an act,' that is to say, fact cannot in any way be 'capable by itself of motivating any act whatsoever.'<sup>31</sup>

Beauvoir also refers to Hegel's definition of 'the master-slave relationship' in order to interpret the man-woman relationship as it has historically been unfolded. As regards Hegel's approach to the master-



slave relation, the advantage of the master it is that he asserts 'the Spirit' against 'Life through the fact that he risks his own life' through that process of assertion whereas the slave although being aware of this risk remains unable to assert rather he is conquered by the master in the process of risking his life for conquering the world. Throughout the history, there has been a tension between man and woman and woman knows very well that she 'does not risk *her* life' despite the fact that she being an existent creates life herself perpetuating it through history. Thereby she in accord with Hegel's master-slave model remains passive in that she being a consciousness does not assert but rather always remains dependent on the other consciousness (the male consciousness), which Hegel identifies as an 'essence' of 'animal life.' Beauvoir wants woman to ascend from the animal level of existence where she leads her life depending on the male consciousness, as she believes that the female consciousness 'also aspires to and recognizes the values that are concretely attained by the male.' The positive element in that act of aspiration and recognition it is that 'women have never set up female values in opposition to male values' but men have always had that tendency of maintaining a culture of safeguarding exclusive rights and authorities peculiar for their rank in opposition to that of women. Beauvoir accuses men of being a 'prerogative' class of individuals who have in the process of history created a 'feminine domain of immanence' wherein women are imprisoned as slaves. She believes that this subordinating attitude of the feminine is not natural and necessary; women are like men the existents who are able to seek 'self-justification through transcendence.' And the contemporary movement of feminism demands that women should be 'recognized as existents by the same right as men' and should not be treated as beings that 'subordinate existence to life, the human being to its animality.'<sup>32</sup>

### **Beauvoir's Concept of Woman's Freedom in the Perspective of the Transcendence-Immanence Contrast**

There may be several ways of defining Beauvoir's concept of woman's liberation yet the most appropriate is one that will be considerate toward immanence-transcendence relation. Seen from the existentialist point of view, woman as far as her facticity is concerned is found as an existent being enclosed immanently within a particular set of meanings like weakness, passivity and dependence on man. This historical outcome of her facticity is something that woman has accepted in bad faith. The being of woman's consciousness does not only disclose that

she is weak, passive or dependent with respect to the Others, it also shows negative attitude toward herself. She enjoys her reality of negating her own existence of a free individual subject directing her consciousness toward a life of dependence, un-freedom and passivity as an object. This attitude of immanence in which woman lies to herself, she deceives her own and she deliberates to find her consciousness having something as true which she can easily recognize to be false is what one may call bad faith. This is an experience of bad faith, as in this case woman attempts to hide truth of her being from her own in such a way that her consciousness is in complete possession of the truth she is hiding; the truth that she can transcend her facticity of un-freedom, dependence and passivity as an individual subject being absolutely free to make her own fate. This mutuality of truth and falsehood in the unity of woman's consciousness makes her bad faith a paradoxical existentialist experience for her. Her bad faith facilitates her consciousness to have ambiguity of meanings of her being as a subject and an object. She is unable to define her existence as a being-for-itself that can deliberate to transcend her facticity of weakness and un-freedom, as her consciousness has been forced since the time unknown to admit that she is immanently enclosed as an object within the structure of a being-in-itself characterized by the fixed feminine traits of passivity and dependence. Beauvoir judges that owing to this ambiguity of meanings woman denies her being-for-itself as an individual subject in order to avoid the painful fact of her being condemned to be free. She plays with these ambiguities of meanings of for-itself and in-itself in bad faith when she deceptively realizes that she is a weak, passive and un-free being (in-itself) whereas she knows well that she is an independent, free subject (for-itself) which she may find painful to accept in her life-situation. This experience of self-consciousness of woman is certainly anguished however she may be able to release herself of this anguish if she in good faith accepts that in her facticity she is weak, fragile and un-free yet she can transcend this for-itself of hers through her further projections in life as an independent individual subject. This life-projection of hers from immanence to transcendence requires her exercising freedom at two different levels in two different forms. On the one hand, woman should be "negatively"<sup>33</sup> free from immanence in the sense that she ought to release herself from the Others' interference that has been forcing her to be immanently enclosed within the structured feminine traits of weakness, passivity and dependence. On the other hand, she should be

“positively” free to transcend through her life projections to be her own master, whose life depends on her own and not upon any external forces. This twofold structure of liberty, namely the structure of freedom *from* (negative) immanence and freedom *to* (positive) transcendence affords us may be the most suitable paradigm for interpreting Beauvoir’s concept of woman’s liberation.

### **Freedom *from* Immanence**

There are several dimensions of immanence that make woman enclose in her facticity yet the major aspect of that immanence is, according to Beauvoir, woman’s economic dependence on man. Woman may be free from her obedience to man or she may be free to cast her vote like a male individual or she may have other socio-political forms of liberty but these liberties cannot guarantee her that she is truly free until and unless she emancipates from the economic dependence on male as a ‘wife or as a courtesan.’ Not a ballot in her hand or her being not obedient can emancipate her truly in lifeworld but a gainful employment can make woman deny the alleged negative meanings attached with her existence by the society through traversing ‘the distance that separated her from the male.’<sup>34</sup> Once she releases herself from being economically supported by male, the social order grounded upon that parasitic attitude of hers will be disintegrated; and there will be no requirement any more of a ‘masculine mediator’ between woman and her lifeworld. She can live like a genuine individual subject if she does not stand on others’ economic support. In her facticity when she is not allowed to be economically active, she remains in ‘the vain pursuit of her true being through narcissism, love, or religion.’ However, when she actively participates as an economically productive individual, ‘she regains her transcendence’ by projecting her life through concrete assertions as subject; she asserts her responsibility as an individual, as she pursues her aims and earns her life through the money and rights she has as a productive self. This is one side of a picture; the whole picture of woman’s having a job is not so simple rather it has a complex situation for woman; it has its own structure of immanence that may be worsening her facticity. In this regard, Beauvoir takes the case of woman as factory worker. As a factory worker a woman obviously becomes economically independent yet simultaneously she becomes a member of an oppressed class – the labour class. Her employer asks her to work in the factory for forty hours a week and the same load of work she has to take at home

because she is also a housewife. So the society and her husband both are exploiting woman in the sense that the former is using her productivity for its well-being while the latter is not assisting her in the household. Although women may experience a feel of being integrated in lifeworld as workers and also loving wives, they persist in the facticity of being unable 'to become in concrete fact the equals of the men' which is to say that they remain within 'the traditional feminine world.' It means that the gainful employment of woman cannot necessarily emancipate her from playing the traditional role as a suppressed being. And it is not the specific case of factory worker; the other professional women like the shopgirl or the secretary etc. are having the same persistence of their being exploited in one way or the other.

One form of social interference in women's status as an individual like man and which, according to Beauvoir, woman should have freedom from is the custom concerning the male-female difference as regards their outlook – the physical appearance, the way they dress up, the way they look like etc. There is no such social issue with men that they have to take thought of how to dress up; he rarely thinks normally of what would the other opine or how would they judge of his outlook because he does not find himself an object to be looked at or judged as an object of beauty. In this regard, the case of woman is altogether different. She is always conscious of how she will look like if she dresses up this way rather than that way, as she knows traditionally that 'when she is looked at she is not considered apart from her appearance; she is judged, respected, desired, by and through her toilette.' So woman, in order to look like woman in traditional feminine sense, requires a permanent budget for 'setting-hair, make-up materials, new dresses' which costs enormously as compared to what man requires to look like man through his outfit. Although this meaning of to be looking beautiful might be imposed extraneously upon woman, she does give care to her appearance because she 'wants to retain her womanliness for her own satisfaction.' In her childhood she finds her mother and in her adolescence her elder sisters inculcating the desire for a home or an interior of her own. This sense of destiny drives her to entertain the 'narcissistic dreams'; to 'the male phallic pride' she wants to be seen 'attractive.' The destiny of having home in the insecure masculine world symbolizes woman's own self as an interior wherein she finds the refuge out of the insecurities of life.

Woman's sexuality is a complex phenomenon yet in its overall orientation the most intensely she feels is the element of male-female inequality in sexual experience and satisfaction. Beauvoir thinks that sexual experience is a unique level of man-woman affinity where each party equally needs the other; so it should obviously manifest equality between the two. But even in that case woman has to experience inferiority as she finds herself as compared to man in all other domains of their existence. In this regard, Beauvoir takes the case of those women who are professionally successful and are up to certain extent enjoying an equal social status as compared to that of a successful man in the society. These are the women who can in no way be considered dependent on man economically or socially; the independent women like high professionals and intellectuals. Even the women of such a status when has 'access to the masculine world as does the male to the feminine world' in order to have the symmetrical sexual experience, what she faces intensely is the fact that 'the demands of the *other* are not symmetrical in the two symmetrical cases.' This situation, according to Beauvoir is less painful for those women who do not intellectualize issues deeply rather focus more on their physical appearance, for such women may easily fulfill the demands of their male partners by finding leisure for beauty care aiming to be more seductive. But for an intellectual woman like Beauvoir it is an experience of suffering, as it may be ridiculous for her to spend that much time in beauty care and in making herself seductive because it is demanded by a man. As she is a thinker she cognizes her situation; she knows that she has to make herself attractive only for falling victim to the male phallic pride; it is for her like degrading herself into immanence of sexual desire that makes her suffer 'from an inferiority complex.' Instead of being relieved by sexual experience an intellectual woman suffers from it, as it makes her feel awkward to please and seduce someone; and so 'she becomes vexed' with her being an object of sexual pleasure. According to Beauvoir, at that moment such woman begins to act for 'her revenge by playing the game with masculine weapons: she talks instead of listening, she displays subtle thoughts, strange emotions; she contradicts the man instead of agreeing with him, she tries to get the best of him.' This attitude of a psychological complex may most of the time irritate men rather than conquer them, as there are men who have no intension of slaving women for their sexual desires instead they will to love an equal and through the way of loving them they experience their

sexuality as a mutual process of pleasure for both of them. At this juncture of her argument Beauvoir shows a hope that men have now begun 'to resign themselves to the new status of woman; and she, not feeling condemned in advance, has begun to feel more at ease.' At present as compared to the past the working women are 'less neglectful' of their 'femininity' without losing their 'sexual attractiveness.' This situation shows that the western part of the world is showing 'progress toward equilibrium' in terms of man-woman sexuality; yet Beauvoir finds it 'incomplete.' As far as woman's 'erotic and affectional life' is concerned she faces difficulties at different levels of her existence. The women who are not economically and socially independent rather living dependently as wives and courtesans 'are deeply frustrated' in their experience of sexuality yet they never challenge their husbands and masters to be emancipated. They remain silently so engaged in their everydayness that they never give thought to the fact that they have buried their will and desires. The case of an independent woman is a little different but she is also facing difficulties in her sexual life. She is busy in her life as an active individual and she never compares herself with a dependent woman instead 'she considers herself at a disadvantage only in comparison with man.' This consideration of hers brings frustration for her when she being woman acts taking man as a standard in expressing and satisfying her physical desires.

An independent working woman invests 'her energy' as a responsible professional and she 'knows how harsh is the struggle against the world's opposition; in that process she 'needs – like the male – not only to satisfy her physical desires' but also to divert herself from the burden of her job by mutually agreeable sexual activities. Woman in this regard experiences the male-female inequality, as there are certain 'social circles' in which, according to Beauvoir, woman's free attempt to satisfy her sexual desires is not 'concretely recognized.' When a woman is to exercise her sexual freedom, she has to do this not without the fear that it might be a risky proposition for her, as it might be jeopardizing for her 'reputation' and 'career; at the least a burdensome hypocrisy is demanded of her.' As compared to woman man is free to satisfy his sexual desires even if he has to do with sexuality as a matter of temporary interest; in that case he can find institutions in society for sexual satisfaction. Beauvoir shows here her dissatisfaction on the unavailability of brothels<sup>35</sup> for the fulfillment of woman's physical

desires even though she explicitly judges that ‘woman does not obtain “appeasement” as mechanically as does the male.’

If woman acts like man in order to execute her sexual will, one more possibility that can be available for her ‘is to pick up in the street a sexual partner’ as a temporary arrangement. This attempt of a woman, according to Beauvoir, will prove to be jeopardizing for her in many ways. First, there is a risk of transmission of ‘venereal disease’ through the intercourse with an infected individual, ‘because it is the man who is responsible for taking precautions against infection.’ Second, if man is not infected still there is a danger for woman to become pregnant. Third, and it is the most important one, man is physically stronger than woman; and in case of bringing some relatively physically strong stranger at her place woman is in permanent threat to be looted or treated violently.<sup>36</sup> If a woman is not interested in such temporary arrangements to satisfy her sexual desires she can keep ‘a permanent lover, as a man often takes a mistress.’ But this arrangement is also not devoid of difficulties. First and foremost this arrangement is possible for only those women who can financially afford it; a woman of ordinary means cannot have such a facility. Second, a young woman in her adolescence cannot take a man to be such a lover because in that age she is associated so profoundly with her lover that she remains unable to keep sex dissociated from the love sentiments. Therefore, only a relatively mature woman can successfully hold such a sexual relationship. Third, even if a woman is mature enough as well as granted the means, she, according to Beauvoir, never finds ‘the purchase of a male a satisfactory solution’ for her sexual problem, as she is more ‘clear-sighted’ as compared to man in defining her love relationship and so she cannot be blinding herself as regards the fraudulence involved here ‘but only at the cost of entertaining a more calculated bad faith.’

Sexual experience, for Beauvoir, is not significant for human beings (men and women both) in the sense that it brings them satisfaction rather it is important because by satisfying man’s/woman’s ‘erotic desire’ it in a way maintains ‘dignity’ for him/her as a human being. Man experiences himself to be a subject while deliberating to make his sexual partner enjoy her erotic experience, as in that case he feels to be like an ‘imperious conqueror, or lavish donor – sometimes both at once.’ On the other hand, woman also wills to bring her partner into subjection of her sexual pleasure by overwhelming him ‘with her gifts’;

and she remains convinced that she is giving that gift to her partner out of her generosity. That element of bounteousness toward her partner in sexual experience makes her feel freedom like a subject especially when she willfully chooses such a partner who remains thankful to her for her overwhelming sexual attitude.<sup>37</sup> But men generally, according to Beauvoir, do not like that feminine overwhelm in sexual experience in which they are 'chosen' by her 'as the means for satisfying her need in its generality: so chosen, they feel exploited.' As a matter of fact men do not appreciate their female sexual partner if she tries to take the initiative in sexual experience; instead they like to arouse her erotic desires making her feel excitement at optimum. For in that case only they can satisfy themselves being 'intent on conquering' woman as a passive object of their sexual fulfillment. This male dominion in sexual experience does not admit that women can satisfy herself as a subject rather she is always found to be 'the prey' of the male erotic desires. So woman under the yoke of that social givenness 'is represented...as pure passivity, available, open, a utensil; she yields gently to the spell of sex feeling, she is fascinated by the male, who picks her like a fruit.' This social situation reflects 'a general refusal' to think of woman as a free individual which is a form of interference with woman's free act of satisfying her erotic desires; thus woman is required to make herself free from this social negation. In this regard, Beauvoir warns women that in order to get rid of that social constraint they should not become a victim of 'masochism.' Woman's masochistic attitude toward her sexuality defines her readiness to feel dominated by her male partner with the hope of finding deep 'submissive pleasure' in his arms. This feel of having submissive pleasure may take the form of an addiction that may drive woman to have the painful climax of this adventure when she confronts frigidity in her sexuality, as in that case she may become habitual of the same feel leading her toward boredom.<sup>38</sup> This social situation in which one either wants to win or avoid defeat in the battle of sexuality can be changed with pleasant outcome if according to Beauvoir 'the both partners recognize each other as equals' showing 'a little modesty and some generosity.' It is not difficult for a man to show the traits of modesty and generosity while falling in love with a woman. As he belongs to 'the male caste' having superior status in the society, he may have several reasons for this easiness in becoming affectionate to a woman belonging to the lower caste. First, his being introduced to the novelty of the feminine world brings him pleasure and joy in the sharing of feels of loving a woman



and being loved by her. Second, since she belongs to a subordinated caste a woman may be excused by her lover if she mistakes or shows weaknesses in her personality. Her male partner can easily overlook if his beloved woman 'is not very intelligent, clear-sighted, or courageous,' as he may understand that she is such a person because she is a victim of not being allowed to develop herself as a free individual as he has the opportunity to realize his talent. He remains positively hopeful that his beloved is capable of molding herself in accord with his desires and dreams; 'she can be credited with any responsibilities, because she *is* nothing in particular.' As compared to man, a woman does not find it so much easy to hold a man in affectionate relationship on the ground of equality, as he is superior and powerful, 'he has made himself irrevocably' what he is. Since he is not like her nothing rather he is always something, therefore there is no chance of his becoming in the future in accord with her dreams and desires. So love-relationship 'with him is impossible unless she approves his acts, his aims, his opinions.' When a woman meets a man in their shared lifeworld, what he offers is his accomplished self that has nothing like a promise to change that world by changing himself in accord with her dreams; and if he makes such a promise woman gets confused whether it will happen or not. So she has always to wait for such a man who can do that for her.

The societal interference, according to Beauvoir, with woman's existence in terms of the burden on her of the household in addition to the bearing, caring and bringing up of children also belongs to the area within which a woman can act unobstructed by man. That is to say, woman has every right to free herself *from* this burden in order to become equal with man.<sup>39</sup> But at present woman is unable to withstand such a forceful encroachment by the society on her private life. It is given in the social order that it should be woman's responsibility to do the housework and to take care of the children. The traditional meaning of the word, wife has the connotations of a loyal companion, 'a good housekeeper, a devoted mother' and other similar phrases. This multidimensional role of a woman is to set a 'task' for her that 'overwhelms' her whole personality. She has to lead several lives simultaneously; she as a wife has to 'assume' her husband's 'cares and participate in his successes,' as it is concerned with her own 'fate'; she as a mother has to give care to bringing up their children, as it is wholly and solely a responsibility of hers; and as an individual she is herself a person having her own desires and dreams which she wants to

fulfill. In the overall givenness of this household world in the nexus of the traditional universe of the lifeworld, she intensely feels that 'the first place' both in the world and the universe 'is for man to occupy.' She wants to raise her voice against this unjust gender-based division of statuses of human beings in the society but she remains silent, because 'she fears that in claiming it she would ruin her home.' Consequently, 'between the desire to assert herself and the desire for self-effacement she is torn and divided.'

One more space of the negative freedom where woman's biological nature and social customs both interfere with her liberty is the phenomenon of maternity. Beauvoir knows that as it is a natural givenness woman cannot 'perform' in this sphere 'in complete liberty,' yet she wants woman to exercise freedom as much as possible. She 'thanks' in this regard to the availability of certain 'contraceptive techniques' on account of which it has now become possible for woman to willfully avoid the unwanted pregnancy and 'decline maternity.' In the past when such medical facilities were not available for woman, she had to take herself 'responsible for an unwanted child' that could 'ruin' her social and 'professional life.' This is the fate both of the married and unmarried mothers, whereas the latter might have confronted additional problems; she 'is a scandal to the community, and the illegitimate birth is a stain on the child; only rarely is it possible to become a mother without accepting the chains of marriage.' These are the problems a mother normally faces before the birth of her child, but thereafter she alone has to take the responsibility of the care and bringing up the baby that is enough for paralyzing the mother's 'social activity.' Although there are certain facilities like daycare centres and kindergarten they are not perfectly convenient for her; 'she can go on working only if she abandons it to relatives, friends, or servants.'

### **Freedom to Transcendence**

All of the aspects of the negative freedom that have been discussed above constitute the structure of immanence wherein woman has now found herself enclosed. If woman gets herself free from all the constraints society has traditionally imposed on her what can she achieve most in that case? She can be economically independent, she can be able to rise and shine in the career she has chosen for herself, she can get less responsible in the household affairs etc. But is it the real meaning of freedom in the existentialist sense? One cannot be free

in existentialist nexus if one is merely free *from* this or *from* that. The genuine freedom pertains to the notion of transcendence. In case of the feminine, the existentialist meaning of freedom can be realized when independent woman does not merely seek to shine in the sphere prescribed to her rather she has to set herself daringly and bravely toward the goal created for her by herself. In such an act of 'setting out toward ends' one can learn how to experience the risk of 'disappointments.' She has to develop 'a taste for adventure.' She does not only have to prove to herself that she can handle a job properly rather she has to educate herself how to 'passionately lose herself in her projects.' While progressing women are habitual of 'looking back to see how far they have come,' which shows their persistence to their immanence and 'interrupts' their life projects. This attitude may allow them to succeed in an 'honorable career' but she remains unable to 'accomplish great things.' In order to do great things woman has to transcend her facticity of being contented with the mediocrity as a professional, and she has to aim at the projections of herself that will lead her to finding the future space for the realization of her true self. Beauvoir says:

"What woman essentially lacks today for doing great things is forgetfulness of herself; but to forget oneself it is first of all necessary to be firmly assured that that now and for the future one has found oneself."

Artists, writers and philosophers are the genuinely individual subjects who attempt 'to found the world anew on a human liberty.' Art, literature and philosophy are the most appropriate arenas for woman to experience themselves transcendent, as these are the spheres wherein the creator of meanings *ab initio* denies all constraints the world is to impose on him and thus he is able to assume clearheadedly 'the status of a being who has liberty.' One's finding oneself as a consciousness that emerges out of the process of history restricts one's ability to reflect on the world through traditional meanings. But Beauvoir wants woman to question those meanings and attempt to go beyond that knowledge limiting her existence within the mold of customs and conventions. Beauvoir here appears to be firmly antithetic to the Gadamerian hermeneutics.<sup>40</sup> She thinks that since woman has lost herself with its true meaning within the conventional structure of education entrapping her in the inferiority complex in her relationship to the dominating male, it is therefore justifiable for her to transcend that historicity of her being. Art, literature and philosophy afford her

the space to assert her freedom by going beyond what is factual to the world created anew by her. Beauvoir advises the woman who wants to become an artist, a writer or a philosopher that she 'must first emerge from [the world] into a sovereign solitude if' she has 'to regain a grasp upon it: what woman needs first of all is to undertake, in anguish and pride, her apprenticeship in abandonment and transcendence; that is, in liberty.'<sup>41</sup> A true piece of art is deeply embedded in the mass of its surrounding culture; and so a true artist must not only be cultured or civilized in normal sense but rather she must grasp culture 'through the free action' of a transcendent existent. That is to say, a true artist must be a transcendent self or a 'free spirit' that projects 'itself toward an empty heaven that it is to populate; but if a thousand persistent bonds hold it to earth, its surge is broken.' Such an experience of liberty as transcendence has an infinite impact on an artistic mind, through this richness of freedom of one's spirit one discovers how an individual can interiorize the whole external lifeworld as his own. Transcendence for Beauvoir is an experience of solitude that may take form of liberty from facticity to become an impetus for an artistic genius for creating a masterpiece. She gives example of Emily Brontë whose 'isolation' enabled her to write a great book, as in her solitude, namely – in the face of nature, death, and destiny, she had no other backing than her own resources.'<sup>42</sup> Still there are very few such creative writers from amongst women who were able to transcend the level of mediocrity to become an artistic genius. 'The constraints that surround her and the whole tradition that weighs her down prevent her from feeling responsible for the universe, and that is the deep-seated reason for her mediocrity.'

According to Beauvoir, an artistic genius is one who is able to interiorize the whole universe as one's own, free enough to accuse oneself of 'its faults and to glory in its progress.' Such free individuals always find themselves 'in command to justify the universe by changing it, by thinking about it, by revealing it; they alone can recognize themselves in it and endeavor to make their mark upon it.' These transcendent spirits take the burden of responsibility for the whole universe and then they create new meanings for projecting its revival. This is something that has never been done yet by a woman. Woman has never been able to transcend the givenness of her historical existence characterized by passivity, weakness and dependence; she has never been able to believe in herself as a free subject who can 'authorize herself' 'to enact the fate of all humanity'

in her personal existence. In the face of this absolute gloominess, Beauvoir shows that there is spark of hope for woman to revitalize her existence as a free individual. The primary issue in this regard it is that woman should no more think that the 'limitations' she has are not the essential trait of her existence rather it is only her historical 'situation' that she still remains unable to transcend as a being in liberty. She does not agree with the idea that the historically effected fact is established as 'an eternal truth.' Rather historicity as facticity is only a situation that is already undergoing change; a subject can contribute to this changing situation if he or she attempts to project his or her life as a transcendent existence. Men and women both should transcend their 'gender differentiation' to behave like a human being who can unequivocally set his or her goals in the glory of liberty. Once this sexual difference is eliminated from this lifeworld and human beings experience the true meanings of freedom only then according to Beauvoir:

"Will woman be able to identify her personal history, her problems, her doubts, her hopes, with those of humanity; then only will she be able to seek in her life and her works to reveal the whole of reality and not merely her personal self. As long as she still has to struggle to become a human being, she cannot become a creator."<sup>43</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Through this study we have arrived at the task of Simone de Beauvoir's way of defining woman and her liberation in the nexus of phenomenological-existentialist feminism. This task necessitates to travel along all possible relevant ways in order to elaborate the two concepts and thus to have a feel of contentedness for the whole argument of ours.

This interpretation of Beauvoir's existentialist feminism regarding the concepts of woman and liberation is important for us, as we always found ourselves overwhelmed by her sincere attempt of redefining woman and her freedom through the mold of existentialism. Beauvoir deals with the problem of liberation as well as the problem of redefining woman in a more radical manner than any other feminist thinker. Once she makes us understand the problem of defining woman and she comprehensively defines the concept as an existentialist issue in the nexus of the transcendence-immanence contrast, the question of freedom is already raised as to whether or not the same nexus is proportional to comprehend. At that juncture Berlin's concepts of

negative and positive liberty afford us a heuristics to properly interpret the problem of woman's liberation as Beauvoir expounds in the nexus of transcendence-immanence contrast.

Our argumentation shows validly that Beauvoir's existentialist feminism is not a matter of intertextual study rather of reflection on experience while interacting with friends, people, ideas etc. in her lifeworld; the most important life-experience in this respect is her life-long companionship with Sartre. Being a genuine phenomenologist she is convinced with the view that the philosophical meanings whatsoever one comes across with should not be separated from one's life-experience. We have thus tried in this study to trace her feminism back in the nexus of her relationship with Sartre. The pivotal theme of Beauvoir's magnum opus, *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)* is the idea that women in relation to men have placed secondarily in the lifeworld since the ancient times and further that this secondary position of women in the social order is imposed by the force of the patriarchal atmosphere rather than the feminine characteristics.

This paper has construed a two-fold argument. First, it has shown how Beauvoir defines woman in the existentialist mold and then how she expounds the possibility of freedom that can heuristically constitute woman as a true subject or individual projected so by her own.

Beauvoir condemns the process of history and tradition that has made woman deprive in absolute terms of the urge of transcending the state of the secondary being. It has been the process of the millennia that men – legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists – have firmly been struggling to establish that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. The religions, philosophies, sciences and arts all have been contributing to this menace characterized by the unjustifiable male domination and female subordination. The female consciousness as an outcome of this traditional process is effected to be an historical consciousness ascribed with the meanings of inferiority and humility. But for Beauvoir all these meanings are prejudiced and biased attempting lopsidedly to convince woman to feel contented with the stagnant and static life.

Under the influence of Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, she directs herself in order to grasp the meaning of femininity to the nexus of phenomenology and existentialism. Heidegger conceives of man as a being-in-the-world and to be there in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a

point of view toward this world. The real nature of man in terms of his relation to himself and to the world is defined by the phenomenon of death. Heidegger admits the finiteness of Being as it is bound up with death but simultaneously he does not deny the unlimited nature of human existence as a temporal development in the openness of future. The death makes man's life finite but before that he projects life through time creating behind him the infinite past and before him the unlimited future; and in this perpetual progress of human species man and woman both take part as correlatives and so this perpetuation of the species does not necessitate sexual differentiation. Besides this she incorporates Merleau-Ponty's dictum that 'man is not a natural species: he is a historical idea.' In this Heidegger-Sartre-Merleau-Ponty perspective human body is conceived in the nexus of situation; for them human body is the instrument of our grasp upon the world, a limiting factor for our projects. As a matter of fact since woman is bodily weaker than man, her grasp upon the world is more limited, and therefore she cannot invest the bodily efforts to accomplish the projects of life with such firmness and steadiness as man can show in seeking his tasks. These facts concerning the bodily traits of man and woman are undeniable but Beauvoir thinks that the biological level is not significant for gauging one's capability of accomplishing life projects. The concept of human strength or weakness can be defined only with reference to existentialist, economic, and moral considerations. Beauvoir tends to define woman as an existent in existentialist connotation who being a free individual is to create her own life projects in order to control the structure of her immanence through transcending the persistence of the facticities. Beauvoir, while defining man's supremacy and woman's Otherness in terms of the meanings of transcendence and immanence, compares the male and the female attitudes rather than aptitudes in relation to their contribution in the making of human history. The tendency of transcending the given is something that woman was deprived of not due to her aptitude as an individual existent rather her attitude determined by not only her own biological make up but the extraneous forces that suppressed her to be submitting to her biological fate. Beauvoir's being certain regarding woman's aptitude of transcending the given lies in her being an accomplice of man in all of his achievements as an individual existent. Man was like a mirror to woman, as she identified herself as an individual existent in comparison with man; like him she felt an urge

of transcending the given facticity going beyond the reiteration of life experience to attain the task of finding new future.

## REFERENCES

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1. Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard (Middlesex, Penguin, 1963), p. 12
2. *Ibid*
3. Sartre did not totally abandon his commitments to Marxism though this notebook entry reflects such meanings. Beauvoir on the same page clarifies about their confusion regarding the meanings of socialism and liberty: "Yet in '41, when [Sartre] was forming a Resistance group, the two words he brought together for its baptism were: socialism and liberty. The war had effected a decisive conversion." See *Ibid*.
4. It reflects their old romance with Marxism and their perpetual detestation for capitalism. Beauvoir in the second volume of her autobiography recalls those memories of their youthful days when they were to dream of the ruining of capitalism. She says: "We counted on events turning out according to our wishes without any need for us to mix in them personally. In this respect our attitude was characteristic of that general euphoria affecting the French Left during the autumn of 1929. Peace seemed finally assured: the expansion of the German Nazi party was a mere fringe phenomenon, without any serious significance. It would not be long before colonialism folded up: Gandhi's campaign in India and the Communist agitation in French Indo-China were proof enough of that. Moreover the whole capitalist world was, at that time, being shaken by a crisis of the utmost gravity; and this encouraged the assumption that capitalism as such had had its day. We felt that we were already living in that Golden Age which for us constituted the secret truth of History and the revelation of which remained History's final and exclusive objective." See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green (New York, Paragon House, 1992), p. 18
5. Beauvoir explains their attitude referring to the influences they experienced at that time through reading both Heidegger and Saint-Exupéry who taught them the 'meanings came into the world only by the activity of man, practice superseded contemplation.' *Op. Cit.*, *Force of Circumstance*, p. 13
6. *Op. Cit.*, Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 47
7. *Op. Cit.*, *The Prime of Life*, p. 20
8. This clarification is not of Beauvoir's rather of Sartre's. Actually, certain Marxists at that time were criticizing Sartre for being influenced by Heidegger and so gone astray being a Marxist. Francis Ponge who ran cultural section of *Les Lettres françaises* told Sartre and Beauvoir about a huge number of articles against Sartre that he was receiving for publication. When he published some of those articles, Sartre was to reply 'with a *Mise*



*Freedom and the Human Positioning in the Lifeworld...*

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- au point* (Definition of Terms).’ This clarification is a part of that reply to the Marxists. On this see *Op. Cit., Force of Circumstance*, p. 16
9. *Ibid.*, p. 21
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-6. On another occasion Beauvoir expresses her unqualified faith in life experience as the most important trait of the art of writing. She said: “I want to write: I want to put down phrases on paper, to take elements from my life and turn them into words.” She further clarifies her ambition as an author more precisely: “I shall never be able to give myself to art excepting as a means of protecting my life.” On this see *Op. Cit., The Prime of Life*, p. 26
  11. Beauvoir and Sartre mutually published this periodical as an organ of existentialism. Its first number appeared in October 1945. The title of the journal was inspired by the Chaplin film – *Modern Times*. The editorial committee was comprised of Raymond Aron, Michel Leiris, Merleau-Ponty, Albert Ollivier, Jean Paulhan, Sartre and Beauvoir. See *Ibid.*, p. 22. This magazine was to play the major role in making Existentialism a worldwide movement in culture and literature; this new ideology of liberation and individualism was projected by Sartre and Beauvoir right from the first number of this periodical. While writing its preface he showed how that new ideology would dwell ‘not only on responsibility in literature, but on the concept of each man as a totality. By implication, not solely in France and its citizens, but people everywhere were to be the concern of the new existentialist periodical. This program [had] been carried out by the magazine to such a degree that literature [had] never attained the importance accorded to political, economic, and sociological matters, both in France and abroad.’ On this see Kenneth Cornall, *Les Temps Modernes: Peep Sights across the Atlantic*, in *Yale French Studies: Foray through Existentialism* (No. 16: Winter 1955), pp. 24-28
  12. *Ibid.*, p. 46
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 47
  14. *Ibid.*
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 48
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 54
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 55
  18. Actually Beauvoir cites from Sartre’s work, *Les Communistes at la paix* (1952). His exact words are: “Coming from the middle classes, we tried to bridge the gap between the intellectual *petite bourgeoisie* and the Communist intellectuals.” See *Ibid.*, p. 15
  19. In this part of the article, I shall take the “Introduction” to Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*), trans. H. M. Parshley (New York, Vintage, 1989) as a reference and guide, submitting its principal theses to my interpretation. I shall give the other references, if any, accordingly.
  20. *Op. Cit., The Prime of Life*, p. 54
  21. Lévinas thinks that the feminine represents an absolute caricature of the otherness (*altérité*) as the contrariness of the masculine, ‘this contrariness

being in no wise affected by any relation between it and its correlative and thus remaining absolutely other. Sex is not a certain specific difference ... no more is the sexual difference a mere contradiction ... Nor does this difference lie in the duality of two complementary terms imply a pre-existing whole ... Otherness reaches its full flowering in the feminine, a term of the same rank as consciousness but of opposite meaning.' See *Op. Cit.*, *The Second Sex*, n. 3 on p. xxii

22. Beauvoir's argument is in opposition to that of Gadamer's. The latter while construing his hermeneutics of tradition, argues that the tradition is not a dead past rather a living continuity, a flow of 'effective-history' that not only encompasses the past but also the relevant present. So the functionality of human consciousness cannot in any way transcend the process of history and tradition, on the contrary it is continued through the very process. On Gadamer's theory of tradition see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)*, trans. G. Barden and W. G. (New York, Crossroad, 1975) specifically Part II
23. *Op. Cit.*, *The Second Sex*, p. 3
24. Beauvoir explains the Heideggerian dictum with reference to Sartre's *L'Être et le néant*. On this see *Ibid.*, p. 7
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5
26. There are many places in Freud's account of femininity where his reader gets that impression that the discourse of femininity he is developing is lopsidedly oriented as subsidiary to that of masculinity. For instance while describing libido he explicitly says: "There is only one libido, which serves both the masculine and the feminine sexual functions. To itself we cannot assign any sex; if, following the conventional equation of activity and masculinity, we are inclined to describe it as masculine, we must not forget that it covers trends with a passive aim. Furthermore, it is our impression that more constraint has been applied to the libido when it is pressed into the service of the feminine function, and that – to speak teleologically – Nature takes less careful account of its [that function's] demands than in the case of masculinity. And the reason for this may lie – thinking once again teleologically – in the fact that the accomplishment of the aim of biology has been entrusted to the aggressiveness of men and has been made to some extent independent of women's consent." On this see Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York, W. W. Norton, 1965), pp. 576-599
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 64
29. See n. 21 above.
30. On this see Chapter I above.
31. Gadamer's notion of effective historical consciousness justifying the inevitable involvement of human self with tradition while producing act is simply antagonistic as compared to Sartre's notion of absolute individuality that Beauvoir takes for granted in construing woman as an existent. Sartre categorically says: "No factual state whatever it may be (the political and

economic structure of society, the psychological “state,” etc.) is capable by itself of motivating any act whatsoever. For an act is a projection of the for-itself toward what is not, and what is can in no way determine by itself what is not... Under no circumstances can the past in any way by itself produce an act.” See Chapter I above and also *Op. Cit.*, Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 435-6

32. *Op. Cit.*, *The Second Sex*, pp. 64-5
33. I refer here to these meanings of negative and positive freedom as expounded by Isaiah Berlin in his famous essay, “Two Concepts of Liberty.” In the negative concept of liberty Berlin conceives of freedom of a person who is free ‘to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes’ with his act of liberty. ‘Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others.’ In case of one’s being positively free one becomes autonomous in the sense that one is ‘a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for one’s own choices and able to explain them by references to one’s own ideas and purposes.’ On this see Two Concepts of Liberty, in Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 118-72
34. The Beauvoirian text on which my interpretation of her concept of woman’s liberation is based is Part VII of *The Second Sex*. So as far as Beauvoir’s ideas are concerned all paraphrasing and citations in this chapter of my thesis refer to Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York, Vintage, 1989), pp. 679-715
35. Beauvoir in this regard refers to a French novel titled *Le Numéro 17* that describes the proposal of a woman for the ‘establishment of houses women could resort for “sexual appeasement” through the services of “taxi-boys.”’ The novelist might not know that such an ‘establishment...formerly existed in San Francisco; the customers were prostitutes, who were highly amused to pay instead of being paid.’ *Ibid.*, p. 687
36. Beauvoir here refers to an actual event reported to her by someone about two young women newly arrived at Paris. Both the girls were eager to “see life” in the Metropolis; and under the yoke of that feel they, ‘after a look around at night, invited two attractive Montmartre characters to supper. In the morning they found themselves robbed, beaten up, and threatened with blackmail.’ *Ibid*
37. In relation to woman’s bounteous attitude toward her partner, Beauvoir mentions the character of a French novel, *Blé en herbe* who responding to her partner’s caresses tells him: “I love only beggars and starved people.” The author of the novel elaborates her attitude: “she made haste toward that obscure and narrow region where her pride could believe that the plaint is an avowal of distress and where beggars of her kind drink the illusion of liberality.” *Ibid.*, p. 689
38. Consolidating her opinion Beauvoir describes the actual case history of a woman, ‘who had been married several times since she was seventeen and had had several lovers, always with much satisfaction. After having successfully managed an enterprise in the course of which she had men

under her direction, she complained of having become frigid. There was formerly a blissful submission that she no longer felt, because she had become accustomed to dominating over males, and so their prestige had vanished.' *Ibid.*, p. 691

39. This is the reason why Beauvoir turned down the marriage proposal by Sartre assuring her that their marriage would remain a mere formality and it would not in any way affect their existentialist way of life. She explains her refusal: "Hitherto we had not even considered the possibility of submitting ourselves to the common customs and observances of our society, and in consequence the notion of getting married had simply not crossed our minds. It offended our principles. There were many points over which we hesitated, but our anarchism was as deep-dyed and aggressive as that of the old libertarians, and stirred us, as it had done them, to withstand any encroachment by society on our private affairs. We were against institutionalism, which seemed incompatible with freedom, and likewise opposed to the bourgeoisie, from which such a concept stemmed. We found it normal to behave in accordance with our convictions, and took the unmarried state for granted." On this see *Op. Cit.*, *Prime of Life*, pp. 65-6
40. See Chapter I above
41. In this regard, Beauvoir quotes Marie Bashkirtsev, who writes: "What I desire is liberty to go walking alone, to come and go, to sit on the benches in the Tuileries Gardens. Without that liberty you cannot become a true artist. You believe you can profit by what you see when you are accompanied by someone, when you must wait for your companion, your family! ... That is the liberty which is lacking and without which you cannot succeed seriously in being something. *Thought is shackled as a result of that stupid and continual constraint.... That is enough to make your wings droop.* It is one of the main reasons why there are no women artists." *Op. Cit.*, *The Second Sex.*, p. 712
42. Beauvoir also gives example of Rosa Luxemburg. On account of her being ugly, Luxemburg 'was never tempted to wallow in the cult of her own image, to make herself object, prey, trap; from her youth, she was wholly spirit and liberty. *Ibid.*, p. 713
43. Beauvoir's dream of a free woman is inspired by Rimbaud's prophecy that she believes will be fulfilled in the future. In a letter to Pierre Demeny (May 15, 1871), Rimbaud writes: "There shall be poets! When woman's unmeasured bondage shall be broken, when she shall live for and through herself, man – hitherto detestable – having let her go, she too, will be poet! Woman will find the unknown! Will her ideational worlds be different from ours? She will come upon strange, unfathomable, repellent, delightful things; we shall take them, we shall comprehend them." *Ibid.*, p. 715

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