

The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir

Edited by

Emily R. Grosholz

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This volume is dedicated to Paula Deitz, with thanks for her example as a writer, her collegiality and encouragement as editor of *The Hudson Review*, and her friendship. Her devotion to the education of women, shared by Simone de Beauvoir and all the contributors to this volume, was honored by the John M. Greene Award bestowed by Smith College in 1995, and her efforts on behalf of that institution have only intensified since then. She, and *The Hudson Review*, also support The Young Women's Leadership School in New York City.

Editor's Preface

The year 1999 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. When I was reminded of that half-century, I started planning a conference as a homage that would achieve two related ends. First, Beauvoir's book should receive greater recognition as a work of philosophy, to encourage more systematic reflection on her methods and aims, on the place of her book in the canon, and on its role in generating social change. Theoretically, *The Second Sex* offers new problems for reflection and novel means for appropriating older texts, and thus plays a central role in the profound shift in philosophy's self-understanding that took place in the latter half of the twentieth century. Its reflective iconoclasm can be compared to that of Descartes's *Meditations*. At the same time it has had an enormous, directly discernible, impact on our social world, and so can also be compared to Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. Thus I wanted to invite scholars to the conference who could illuminate Beauvoir's place in the canon: Susan James, Catherine Wilson, and Michèle Le Doeuff (known for their work on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), and Claude Imbert and Seyla Benhabib (known for their work on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). I also wanted to invite scholars concerned with the intersection of theory and practice, and this made Toril Moi, Michèle Le Doeuff, and Seyla Benhabib obvious choices. Many of these scholars were concerned with feminist issues, but some had never before published on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, so I hoped to find new commentators on her.

The second of my intentions is related to the search for new commentary. Simone de Beauvoir has always inspired me, not just because she was an important philosopher, deeply concerned with the critical and creative powers of reason as well as with the betterment of our suffering world, but also because she worked in a variety of genres, including the novel, political journalism, and the memoir. In this respect, she strikingly resembles W. E. B. Du Bois, who has also commanded my attention and the homage of an edited volume. I understand the multiplicity of her voices to be closely related to her

philosophical project, which is (to use Nancy Bauer's formulation) 'to see whether we can come up with a new way of doing philosophy, one that is rigorous and generalized enough really to count as philosophy but at the same time is tethered in the right way to the sorts of everyday, real-life problems of sexism that are the *raison d'être* of feminism' (Bauer 2001: 25). Moreover, Beauvoir's method proceeds from her own experience: 'I am a woman.' Her reflections thus had to find expression sometimes as narrative, sometimes as autobiography, sometimes as argument, if the philosophical issues themselves were to be addressed adequately; and this was also true for Du Bois. So I wanted to invite scholars for whom philosophical reflection sometimes took the form of historiography, literary criticism, and even fiction or poetry. This was another reason why I invited Toril Moi, Catherine Wilson, and Michèle Le Doeuff, and later added an essay by Anne Stevenson, and wrote my own essay in a literary vein. Broadly stated, I wanted the conference and the present volume to demonstrate the many ways in which Beauvoir's writings, in particular *The Second Sex*, can serve as resources for thought, for the life of the mind which is as concerned with the past and future as it is with the present.

Four of the essays in this volume were written for and delivered at the conference held at the Pennsylvania State University on 19–21 November 1999 entitled 'The Legacies of Simone de Beauvoir'. The idea was first suggested to me by Susan Reighard, Senior Staff Assistant at the Institute for the Arts and Humanistic Studies at Penn State; she is (and was then) pursuing a BA in Women's Studies and is also an active member of the Commission for Women, as I am. I invited two colleagues in the philosophy department, Shannon Sullivan and Susan Schoenbohm, to organize the conference with me; as a result of their efforts, other papers from the conference were collected in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 13/1 (1999), guest-edited by Shannon Sullivan. It includes excellent papers by Margaret Simons (whose scholarly dedication to Beauvoir's work is unmatched), Emily Zakin, Elaine Miller, and Tina Chanter. The conference took place in large part because of the support of two people, my husband Robert R. Edwards, then Director of the Institute, and the Associate Vice-President for Outreach and Executive Director of Continuing Education Patricia Book, whose encouragement and enthusiasm I once again acknowledge with gratitude.

One of the readers of the manuscript of this volume for Oxford University Press characterized the conference as 'the most important

commemoration in the English-speaking world of the fiftieth anniversary of *The Second Sex*, and I am happy to think that it was. Toril Moi delivered a version of her trenchant essay on the Parshley translation that, building on Margaret Simons's earlier essay, made everyone sit up and take note. Catherine Wilson, Claude Imbert, and Susan James gave versions of the essays that appear in this volume, which they have since recast and rethought with characteristic intellectual energy. Michèle Le Doeuff and Seyla Benhabib were unfortunately unable to attend; I was present as an organizer. Nancy Bauer attended the conference as well; although at that time I was unfamiliar with her work, I have since come to esteem it highly and am grateful for the chance to include it here. Toril Moi generously wrote a second, more theoretical, essay for the volume, and I invited Anne Stevenson to reply to it. Michèle Le Doeuff kindly and retrospectively offered an essay for the volume; the task of translating it, as well as the essay by Claude Imbert, I found pleasant and thought-provoking. Seyla Benhabib is represented in the dedication of my essay.

I have divided the essays into three sections, which consider Simone de Beauvoir's legacy from three perspectives: historical, philosophical, and literary. The first section begins with Claude Imbert's 'Simone de Beauvoir: A Woman Philosopher in her Generation'. Claude Imbert has devoted much of her career to the philosophical study of logic. Her recent book *Pour une histoire de la logique* makes use of texts by Plato and Aristotle, as well as the Stoic logicians, and from the modern era texts by Descartes, Kant, and Gauss. She has written extensively on Frege, and his devotion to and rupture with Kant's conception of logic. In the past decade, perhaps as a consequence of trying to think through the insights of Frege and Wittgenstein, she has turned to the period in France that originally sparked her own fascination with philosophy. Her partly historical, partly theoretical book (to be entitled *Années 30: le point de non retour*) examines the radical rethinking of philosophy exemplified in the writings of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Lévi-Strauss. The very first issues of *Les Temps Modernes*, which anyone interested in Simone de Beauvoir should spend time perusing, give a good indication of the stir produced by these philosophers: they left Imbert's sense of her profession permanently altered and unsettled by a profound discontent with 'l'incapacité de la philosophie classique à traiter de l'actuel'. It was thus a short step from her work on this book to her essay on Beauvoir, which illuminates the novelty of both *The*

Ethics of Ambiguity and *The Second Sex* by setting them in historical context.

Imbert begins by making a fascinating comparison between Simone de Beauvoir and Simone Weil. Both of them belonged to the first generation of professionally trained women philosophers, which followed hard on the heels of universally established education for young girls in post-Napoleonic nineteenth-century France. The group included the brilliant but more conventional scholars Jacqueline de Romilly, Simone Pétremond, Florence Ramnoux, and Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, and was also linked to a group of philosophers who published a series of highly original books during the latter half of the 1940s: Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lévi-Strauss. Beauvoir felt very competitive with Weil, but at the same time enjoyed their common ability to beat the men at their own game. While Beauvoir scorned Weil's lack of aesthetic sense and was wary of her radical politics, she shared with her the conviction that philosophy must be *engagée*. And although they both began their careers as teachers, both Weil and Beauvoir were driven by the inability of genius to stay within established bounds, putting their talents in the service of a cause invisible to the university establishment. They shared with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty a desire to bring philosophy into novel relation with the reality of history, with concrete situations, partly as a reaction to the just-ended world war, above whose horrors philosophy seemed to drift like a helpless cloud.

Yet, Imbert argues, Beauvoir's attempt to forge this novel relation was even more radical than Sartre's, so radical in fact that it called the very program of existentialism into question. All of them were trying to disentangle themselves from the philosophical projects of Kant and Hegel; but even Sartre still fell under the influence of his nineteenth-century models (including Flaubert as well as Hegel and Marx) and failed to understand the extent to which his existentialist hero, bravely taking up a radical freedom, was in fact male and not universally human. As Beauvoir carried out the writing and research that ended up as *The Second Sex*, she came more and more to see that a woman in the real world is almost never radically free, but confronts her life as an imposed destiny. In a sense, the only behavior appropriate to her situation is bad faith, yet precisely that internalized combination of hysteria, narcissism, and emotional abandonment in conjunction with externally imposed barriers prolongs her imprisonment. The destiny of women is, after all, a social construction, but one whose reality

women have learned to manage, as they manage their husbands. Beauvoir writes: 'One is not born a woman, but becomes one.' Yet the project of becoming a woman, or for that matter the project of trying to invent a different spectrum of lives for women, escapes the analytic nets of existentialism.

Thus, Imbert writes of *The Second Sex*, the enterprise could not be carried out without a radical revision of existentialist concepts and methods. Beauvoir's stubborn, scholarly examination of the facts of the historical life of women put in question the very philosophical procedures she was using. One collateral consequence of this, Imbert notes, was the disappearance of existentialism during the 1960s. Another was a tension in Beauvoir's book: it treats a consciousness that must struggle for its very recognition as a consciousness—the choices are pretending to be an object, pretending to enjoy domination, or nothingness. This turns *Being and Nothingness*, like Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and indeed Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, into rather shabby pretence, if it cannot be applied to half of humanity. But then, how to proceed? Imbert ends her essay by looking again at the perspectives on the situation of women that have been uncovered by biology on the one hand and anthropology on the other. She argues that just as Beauvoir brings philosophy into novel relation with history, so too does she establish a new tangency with the sciences that treat human beings; and that indeed Beauvoir's task would have been easier if she knew then what we know now. To imagine the liberation of women, it is useful to think of a woman as organism and member of society as well as an isolated mind. To adjoin these other disciplines to academic philosophy is to oppose its small-mindedness. Beauvoir, by her writing and her example, helps us to do both.

Michèle Le Doeuff, like Claude Imbert, decided early on to become a philosopher. For Le Doeuff, however, reflection on the status of women and her own place as a woman in philosophy were central to her writings, along with a commitment to philosophical reason. How, she often asks, can one celebrate reason's ability to criticize and revise, and its ability to think impartially and universally, and at the same time resist the temptation to totalize and dominate? Her search for an acceptable rationalism has developed in tandem with a search for a philosophical feminism: Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir are her two mainstays in both searches, and so are Bacon (many of whose works she has translated into French) and Descartes. One

reason why she found *The Second Sex* so helpful as a young woman and philosopher starting out to fashion an unconventional life was Beauvoir's universalism.

Beauvoir, analyzing the situation of women—as subjects whose subjectivity is systematically constrained, unrecognized, or denied—with particular clarity, revealed to a whole generation of women that their difficulties were not the result of some idiosyncratic, personal failing but were rather reflections of a generalizable social problem. As a writer, Beauvoir also refused the authoritarian, judgmental stance Sartre assumes in *Being and Nothingness*. Her aim, as she says at the beginning of *The Second Sex*, is to understand, in the hope that understanding will speed the end of oppression. And what she wants to examine is the widespread bad faith of women, not condemned as a failing but understood as the normal and almost inescapable response to a social environment that punishes women for the exercise of their autonomy, along with the (normal and almost inescapable) fear and arrogance of men that leads them to punish autonomous women. Indeed, Le Doeuff's argument is the converse of Imbert's. Whereas Imbert criticizes Sartre for having failed to disentangle himself from a Hegelian universalism from which Beauvoir's concern for the concrete social problems of women freed her, Le Doeuff criticizes him for his parochial 'masculinism' and lack of theoretical empathy—the ability to entertain the perspective of the other as well as to admit its opacity. For Le Doeuff, Beauvoir achieves a greater universality—and rationality—than Sartre because of the way she transforms existentialism by making it ethical and then rewriting her existentialist ethics to include the lives of women.

In her essay 'Towards a Friendly, Transatlantic Critique of *The Second Sex*' Michèle Le Doeuff recounts her experience teaching that book in 1976 to her students at Fontenay, when the Ecoles Normales Supérieures were still divided. She and her students were looking for a philosophical discourse that would illuminate questions about the status of women, and examining existentialism (so unfriendly to women in the thought of Sartre) to see what it might offer, as reworked by Beauvoir. Le Doeuff began to lecture on *The Second Sex*, often explicating its philosophical strengths at the expense of Sartre, as she does in the central section of *Hipparchia's Choice*. On Beauvoir's initiative, she and Le Doeuff engaged directly in conversation that was, however, oddly inconsequential for the development of Le Doeuff's reflections, since at

that point the older philosopher had left her own book behind and seemed unwilling to countenance criticism of Sartre. Beauvoir did nonetheless lend her voice and prestige to French feminism throughout the last years of her life, and Le Doeuff came to feel close to her in the context of the political struggle for reproductive rights—the freedom of women to make choices about their own fertility.

Le Doeuff's essay in this volume explains two often overlooked aspects of the political context in which Simone de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex* in the late 1940s. The first is that French women before World War II did not have the vote and were also not politically organized; French women were given the vote after the war almost as a gift or accident, because De Gaulle's new government did not want their enfranchisement to be imposed by the Allies. Thus French women, including Beauvoir, felt ambivalent about the new political role that was thrust upon them, as well as about the Anglo-American culture that had proposed it. So too Beauvoir seems to have had mixed feelings about feminism in England and America, and was reluctant to admit her debt to that tradition. Le Doeuff, by contrast, whose cosmopolitan professional life has often involved her in Anglo-American feminism and philosophical culture, suggests that the mutual acknowledgment of indebtedness would be an important contribution. As Michèle Le Doeuff observes in *Hipparchia's Choice*, nowhere in *The Second Sex* does Beauvoir seem to think of feminism as a social movement; rather, it is a struggle that each woman, understanding the universality of her dilemma as a subject whose subjectivity is in question or under attack, must work out for herself. By contrast, Anglo-American feminism has always had a political dimension, going back to the thought of Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor, and John Stuart Mill. During the 1970s Le Doeuff and her compatriots also found an effective political organization for feminism in France, an organization which Le Doeuff (as her essay in the Fall 2000 issue of *Hypatia* makes clear) is keenly interested in keeping alive. Thus one task for feminism which remains, and which Beauvoir herself did not attempt, is the synthesis of the insights of *The Second Sex* with the political vigor of Anglo-American feminism; indeed, given the current political landscape, we might suppose that the latter itself needs reinvigorating, and that the dispassionate passion of Beauvoir may be especially rewarding just now.

The first generation of professionally trained women philosophers in Europe produced the monumental figures Simone de Beauvoir,

Simone Weil, and Hannah Arendt. (No one up till now has done a good job of analyzing their commonalities and differences as philosophers, nor their failures to collaborate and admire each other, which are just as hard to come to terms with as their complex relations to Sartre, God, and Heidegger.) The latter two have been well edited and translated (when necessary) into English, but the work of Simone de Beauvoir has suffered for various reasons. One is the multiplicity of genres in which she wrote, and her own tendency to represent herself as a writer rather than a philosopher. Three years ago, when I was preparing some of the material for this volume, I went into the famous philosophy bookstore maintained by the publishing house VRIN next to the Sorbonne and asked for a copy of *Le Deuxième Sexe*. 'Ah, Beauvoir,' said the young female salesclerk scornfully, 'you won't find her here, this is a philosophy bookstore. Go next door to FNAC and look in the literature section.' I responded somewhat heatedly that Beauvoir certainly was a philosopher and that it was a scandal they didn't carry her books—Toril Moi recalled her own experiences when I told her this story—and then went next door only to discover that FNAC was out of *Le Deuxième Sexe* and would be for many months. Somehow no one at Gallimard had realized that the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of that book might inspire an increased demand for it. Another reason is that the sole English version of *The Second Sex* is severely flawed both as an edition and as a translation, in ways that profoundly obscure its philosophical import. It has long disappointed and misled philosophers who try to make use of it in English translation.

Toril Moi, in her essay 'While We Wait: Notes on the English Translation of *The Second Sex*', describes a long process of scholarly protest against H. M. Parshley's translation of *The Second Sex*. It begins with Margaret Simons's essay 'The Silencing of Simone de Beauvoir: Guess What's Missing from *The Second Sex*', published in 1983, which first raised the issue by pointing out that more than 10 per cent (actually closer to 15 per cent) of the original two-volume book was omitted in Parshley's translation; cuts that are nowhere signalled in the text. Combining her own research with recent work by Elizabeth Fal-laize, Moi describes in even greater detail what can be called without hyperbole a hatchet job. In fairness, Parshley deserves to be acknowledged as a supporter of feminism at a time when it was distinctly unfashionable for a man of science to be interested in the status of women. Moreover, Parshley was required to make substantial cuts in

the text by Alfred Knopf in order to produce a book of more manageable (marketable) size, and perhaps he was in no position to contest this decision. But it is also true that his limitations as a thinker determine the shape of the result. Avuncular and patronizing even while supportive of feminism, he cuts out descriptions of women's anger, conflict, and oppression. Hostile to socialism, he eliminates almost every reference to socialist feminism in the history section, along with seventy-eight women's names. Trained not as a historian, philosopher, or man of letters but as a scientist, he routinely eliminates copious literary references, which support many of Beauvoir's arguments as important sources of evidence. Moi observes, such cuts are not ideologically innocent, for they impoverish Beauvoir's book by depriving us of the rich variety of women's voices that make up the French text. They also rob us of the insights produced by Beauvoir's brilliant way of juxtaposing philosophical and literary texts, a gift she enjoyed because she was both a writer and a philosopher.

Indeed, Moi's most serious criticism of Parshley as a translator is that he had little philosophical background, and thus the philosophical vocabulary and concepts essential to Beauvoir's arguments are lost on him. He simply does not recognize them for what they are: traces of Beauvoir's long interrogation of the philosophical tradition. Beauvoir uses words that are standard French translations of German terms from the technical vocabularies of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, and Heidegger, terms that are taken up in turn by her French contemporaries for use in developing existentialism and phenomenology. (I would add, in light of Susan James's essay and my own training, that I believe this exercise could also be carried out with respect to the philosophical vocabulary of Descartes and Malebranche, and perhaps also Pascal, Arnauld, Leibniz, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Why has no one attempted it?) As Moi is at pains to show, Beauvoir's use of these terms is always exact and thoughtful, and often—most importantly—subversive in that it both ties her to the tradition and her contemporaries and reveals her distance from them. Parshley cannot even recognize the technical existentialist use of the terms *sujet*, *pour-soi* and *en-soi*, or *réalité humaine*, the special sense of the Hegelian term *poser*, or the Marxist and Lacanian notion of *aliénation*, much less Beauvoir's subversion of this usage, and so it is all lost for us in English translation. Moreover, Parshley's lack of comprehension is often taken by readers to be Beauvoir's own; this is ironic because, as Imbert

points out, Simone de Beauvoir was one of the earliest and most accurate interpreters of Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty, and as a star student at the Sorbonne she always got the doctrines of her philosophical forebears straight as a precondition for departing from them.

Finally, Toril Moi makes the case that Parshley's translation also substantively distorts Beauvoir's positions on many important issues. It makes Beauvoir appear, for example, to be masculinist and anti-motherhood, when in fact what she champions is a woman's right to *choose* her own path rather than have a ready-made destiny thrust upon her. And it makes her appear to hold essentialist doctrines when in fact, as an existentialist and a maverick existentialist at that, she opposes essentialism on every front. More generally, it collapses the richness and irony, the multivocality and subtlety, of *The Second Sex*, qualities valuable in the work of any writer and thinker but indispensable to Beauvoir's project of making the condition of women visible. The essay ends with an implied plea to Knopf/Vintage to reconsider their position. Many feminist scholars, in many countries, stand ready to seek funding for and to carry out a new edition and English translation of *The Second Sex*; they have only to get the green light to begin.

The second section of this collection of essays examines *The Second Sex* and Beauvoir's related writings in philosophical context, as a great book that has assumed its place in the canon and whose position there provokes reflection. Despite the obstacles just discussed, the 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in Simone de Beauvoir as a philosopher, which in the past few years has resulted in important books by Margaret Simons, Eva Gothlin, Toril Moi, Michèle Le Doeuff, Debra Bergoffen, and Nancy Bauer *inter alia*. The Select Bibliography in this volume records much of the growing body of literature, but this is just a beginning. Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical legacy must still be recovered: the transmission of texts must be corrected, and Beauvoir's legitimacy as a philosopher must be re-established. And it must be revived: philosophers female and male should simply make much more use of the resources for thought she provides. Why should it be that *The Second Sex*, a book whose political and philosophical consequences have been so overwhelming, particularly in the anglophone world, has been allowed to languish for decades in a shoddy edition and translation, relatively neglected by the philosophical community for whom it was written? The question itself is food for thought.

Susan James scrutinizes the history of philosophy through the prism of a neglected topic, that of passion, a term which in the theoretical proportions of the seventeenth century is opposed to action and juxtaposed with the body, matter, error, and women. (I see her choice here as parallel to that of the philosopher Jorge Gracia, who examines the neglected term 'the individual' in his historical writings, and then makes use of those insights when he writes about race.) Her book *Passion and Action* is a subtly feminist analysis of the inconsistencies and untapped resources of seventeenth-century philosophy, particularly the work of Descartes and Malebranche, Hobbes and Spinoza. She is also a general editor of the Oxford Readings in Feminism series. When she was invited to the conference at Penn State, however, she had never before written on Beauvoir; she accepted with the hope of integrating the study of Beauvoir and her feminist themes into the history of philosophy, without creating a counter-canon or denigrating the achievement of male philosophers. Already interested in the way in which conceptions of the self are gendered, she had become increasingly interested in how our passions are shaped by relationships of scale (size, distance, power), and was then surprised to find this theme salient in *The Second Sex*. In her essay 'Complicity and Slavery in *The Second Sex*', she examines how Beauvoir takes up the theme for her own purposes and transforms it, deploying traditional resources for feminist ends, and at the same time developing a series of what have become quite familiar insights about the gendering of the self, how a woman is socially constructed. 'One is not born a woman, but becomes one.'

Social hierarchies are built on the unequal distribution of power and, as Aristotle observed, every constitution (and political power generally) is situated between the demand for equality and the inevitability of hierarchy. Susan James's essay has two cognate aims. The first is to locate Beauvoir's arguments vis-à-vis the social reality of hierarchy—in this case the domination of men over women—and political theories that take hierarchy as a given to be dealt with rather than an accident of history to be abolished. The second is to locate such arguments not in the context of Hegel's master-slave dialectic (and Sartre's appropriation of it)—as Eva Lundgren-Gothlin and Nancy Bauer have so admirably done—but rather in the French tradition where Antoine Arnauld, Pierre Nicole, Jean de La Bruyère, and especially Nicolas Malebranche analyze the relations between passion and action in a social code that

is embodied as well as conceptualized. This is a significant move, I think, because current accounts of mid-twentieth-century European philosophy tend to overemphasize the influence of German thinkers in France, and to forget the ongoing engagement of French philosophers with Descartes and Cartesianism, and with the socio-political doctrines of the French Enlightenment, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Perhaps because of the robust French tradition of materialism, this tradition also tends to honor better the claims of the body in its philosophical discourse.

James's approach also underlines Simone de Beauvoir's own reservations and conflicts about the existentialist program, with its relentless emphasis on agency, authenticity, and freedom. To answer the question why we find ourselves in a social world populated by transcendent men and immanent women—when existentialism exhorts all of us regardless of gender to strive for transcendence—Beauvoir instructs us to apply Hegel's master-slave dialectic. However, as James observes, Beauvoir's construal of the analogy between master and slave and man and woman is not straightforward. The complicity of women in their own domination cannot be understood in Hegelian terms as defeat or in Sartrean terms as bad faith; rather, for Beauvoir, complicity is conceived as a condition of an embodied self whose abilities, and therefore options, have been formed by its social circumstances. Thus there is a tension in *The Second Sex* between Beauvoir's understanding of embodiment and her Sartrean conception of humans as split between transcendence and immanence. Beauvoir makes it clear that in the everyday gendered experience of women constraints so severe they appear to be destiny, passions, and the negotiation of dominance by a more powerful group are facts that must be acknowledged, both in theory and in practice. The task of philosophy is not only the optimistic analysis of progressive freedom, but also the more sober analysis of power, especially power opposed to or indifferent to one's own interests.

James makes a compelling case that it would be just as illuminating to set Simone de Beauvoir back into the older, French tradition of philosophical inquiry concerning the character of social hierarchy—and the passions of embodied as well as thoughtful beings that create and sustain it. This is not just a claim about the influences that shaped Beauvoir's project, but an outgrowth of James's own project for reviving the philosophical investigation of the passions, for which she now enlists Beauvoir as a collaborative partner. As James observes, in

French philosophy of the late seventeenth century hierarchical social relations are widely held to depend on affects of admiration and contempt that operate on and through the body. In the resulting economy of the passions people are construed as complicit in their domination in a sense very like the one articulated by Beauvoir.

Malebranche, like Beauvoir, explains the acceptance of social subordination by pointing to relatively unyielding and thoroughly embodied differences of power that shape the exchange of esteem and admiration: the role of subordinates is not to exact esteem but to furnish it. At the same time, those who rule require and reward the admiration of their subordinates: the *grandeur* of the prince or husband rubs off on the indispensable courtier or wife. Indeed, the intimacy of life at court or within marriage gives the subordinate special, critical insight into the private failings of the *grand homme* who must always be honored publicly, as La Bruyère observed. The pleasant mutual illusions of hierarchy thus always risk degenerating into slavishness and hypocrisy: as Aristotle and Machiavelli warned, every constitution requires vigilant maintenance. One advantage of placing Beauvoir's arguments into this context is to be reminded that men can also be enslaved and trapped within socially imposed structures of complicity, in ways that are physical as well as psychical; and that history teaches that such subordination based on unalterable biological conditions (in this case, blood lines) can be revised. Thus, James concludes, just because woman's subordination is written on her body does not make it ineluctable, or intractable to philosophical reflection or political remedy. Part of the remedy is the tough-minded acknowledgment of forms of social hierarchy that must be assessed and negotiated, and that can be transformed but never abolished. The genocidal political experiments of the twentieth century that tried to impose pure egalitarianism and eliminate the messy maintenance of always imperfect constitutions are the tragic proof of Aristotle's wisdom.

Catherine Wilson was working on Leibniz and the relations between seventeenth-century philosophy and the emerging sciences of physics and biology in the late 1980s when she was asked to teach a course on feminism. Out of a sense of duty she agreed, and soon became fascinated by *The Second Sex*, at first as a work of literature and then as a philosophical text when she began systematically to reflect on the causes of female subordination and its remedies. In recent years she has turned her attention both to such questions in the context of