



# Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism

By Nancy Bauer

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**Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism** By Nancy Bauer

In the introduction to *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir notes that "a man never begins by establishing himself as an individual of a certain sex: his being a man poses no problem." Nancy Bauer begins her book by asking: "Then what kind of a problem does being a woman pose?" Bauer's aim is to show that in answering this question *The Second Sex* dramatizes the extent to which being a woman poses a philosophical problem.

This book is a call for philosophers as well as feminists to turn, or return to, *The Second Sex*. Bauer shows that Beauvoir's magnum opus, written a quarter-century before the development of contemporary feminist philosophy, constitutes a meditation on the relationship between women and philosophy that remains profoundly undervalued. She argues that the extraordinary effect *The Second Sex* has had on women's lives, then and now, can be traced to Beauvoir's discovery of a new way to philosophize—a way grounded in her identity as a woman. In offering a new interpretation of *The Second Sex*, Bauer shows how philosophy can be politically productive for women while remaining genuinely philosophical.

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## Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism By Nancy Bauer Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2495885 in Books
- Published on: 2001-07-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.04" h x .70" w x 6.04" l, .96 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

In her concise but closely argued book, Bauer demonstrates the philosophical importance of Beauvoir's work, not only as foundational for contemporary feminism but as a major contribution to philosophy.... A real must-have for libraries serving serious women's studies programs.

*(Choice)*

A powerfully argued, lucid and fascinating book which, as well as offering a timely reassessment of Beauvoir's thought, raises important questions for feminism about the most effective way to undermine masculine privilege.

*(Lois McNay Times Literary Supplement)*

A brilliant study of Simone de Beauvoir's masterpiece.

*(Hilary Putnam)*

Bauer's subtle and original elucidation of Beauvoir's philosophical relationship to Descartes, Hegel, and Sartre is a truly important contribution to the field of feminism and philosophy?and to feminist theory in general.

*(Toril Moi)*

### **About the Author**

Nancy Bauer is assistant professor of philosophy at Tufts University.

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