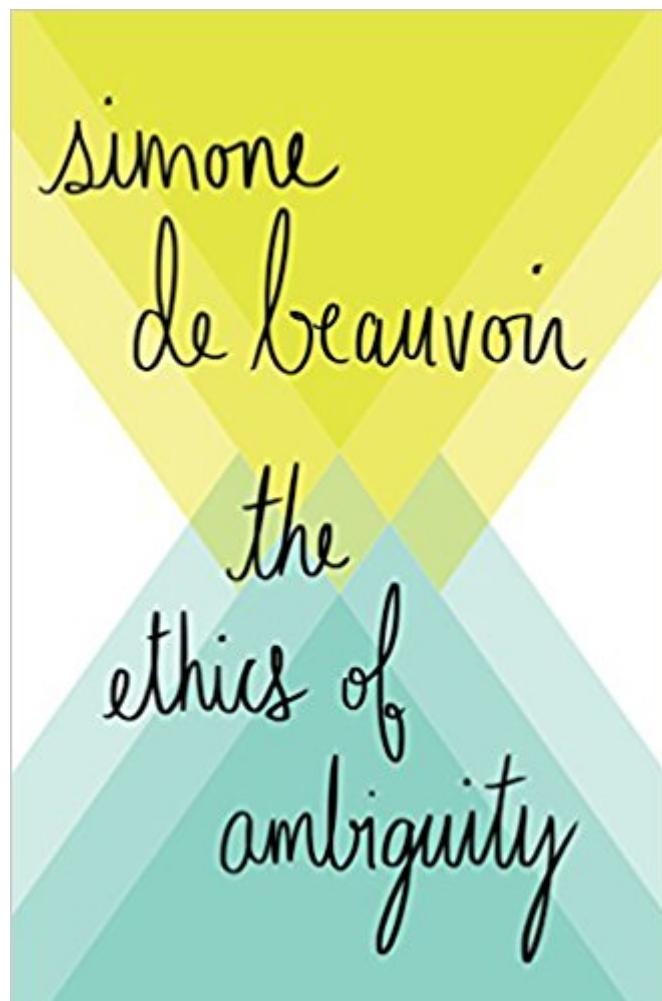


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# The Ethics Of Ambiguity



## Synopsis

From the groundbreaking author of *The Second Sex* comes a radical argument for ethical responsibility and freedom. In this classic introduction to existentialist thought, French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* simultaneously pays homage to and grapples with her French contemporaries, philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, by arguing that the freedoms in existentialism carry with them certain ethical responsibilities. De Beauvoir outlines a series of "ways of being" (the adventurer, the passionate person, the lover, the artist, and the intellectual), each of which overcomes the former's deficiencies, and therefore can live up to the responsibilities of freedom. Ultimately, de Beauvoir argues that in order to achieve true freedom, one must battle against the choices and activities of those who suppress it. *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is the book that launched Simone de Beauvoir's feminist and existential philosophy. It remains a concise yet thorough examination of existence and what it means to be human.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) was a French existentialist philosopher, intellectual, and social theorist best known for her writings on existentialist ethics and feminist existentialism, as well as for her infamous polyamorous relationship with fellow French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. World-renowned for her metaphysical novels *She Came to Stay* and *The Mandarins*, de Beauvoir also wrote a number of essays on philosophy, politics, and social issues. Her diverse

writings go on to include biographies, as well as her four-volume autobiography, made up of Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter, The Prime of Life, Force of Circumstance, and All Said and Done. In addition to her philosophical writing, de Beauvoir was an ardent feminist, her most famous philosophical work being The Second Sex, which is consistently referenced in the study of feminism.

I first read this book forty years ago for an undergraduate class in social philosophy. I've re-read it five or six times since, and benefitted from each re-reading. Though it was not DeBeauvoir's intention to write an introduction to existentialism, this is the best one available. What is the meaning of life? It has none save that which we give it, an inescapable process which the author terms "disclosure of being in the world." This view is strongly relativistic, to be sure, providing no basis for preferring a painfully abscessed molar to good sex. Unlike the early Sartre, moreover, DeBeauvoir recognizes that we disclose being in the world -- learn what it means to be -- in very specific ways, in socially determined contexts. The meanings we discern are bounded by the social worlds of which we are the ongoing creations and which we help to create. DeBeauvoir's answer to what-is-the-meaning-of-life kinds of questions is not spiritually uplifting, but it's an answer, given without equivocation or hollow appeals to faith. As such, I think it's the right answer. She makes a compelling case. Can we organize our lives around "disclosure of being in the world?" I don't think so. It's much too abstract, fraught with anomie, positing a sort of Durkheimian nightmare. Still, at least we know where we stand: right in the middle of a universe that anticipates by two or three decades post-modern rejection of any sort of natural and durable foundation.

Just wonderful read on how we are all in different places and work with our own lives to make us happy

A couple of editing problems (floating periods, capitalization issues), but for the most part, an excellent printing of a phenomenal existential summary.

In depth insight to the human problem of the Love-Hate relationships. de Beauvoir opens doors in our mind and heart to an area of ourselves which most people are unaware. Excellent read. Sometimes I need only read a few pages and the clearly explained dilemma of existence set me for the day. I have gained deep insight into my life.

Read excerpts of this for an Existentialism class in college. Good edition.

Beauvoir is a great writer. Inspired me to take responsibility for all my decisions!

Ms. de Beauvoir certainly writes with more clarity than her friend, Sartre. But it took me several readings of the first page to understand just what the ambiguity was that she was writing about! However, after that, I found her essays compelling and relevant to our current troubles. It is definitely a good time to review what she had to say. She still speaks to us!

Some of the best of de Beauvoir.

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