**Readings for 18 April 2017**

PHIL242L111 Existentialism

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*Existentialism and Popular Wisdom* (Beauvoir)

1. *Some people have a negative reaction to existentialism because they think it gives us a pessimistic or dark view of human nature. But Beauvoir points out that people have long held cynical views about things like love, friendship, happiness, etc. What are some of these negative popular views about love, etc., and why does she think it is sometime hypocritical for people to espouse them?*

Some negative views include “possession kills love”, “novelty always appears handsome”, and “out of sight, out of mind”. We should not espouse them, because to Beauvoir, this is all just human nature. It is not negative or positive, it rather just *is*.

1. *For Beauvoir, the real reason why people are critical of existentialism is because they are afraid of the view it defends in regards to the nature of the human self, freedom and responsibility. How are these things understood by existentialism and how does its understanding differ from the "popular" views of the self, freedom, etc.?*

Most people either believe in self-determination or pre-destination (depending on your religion). A lot of existentialists believe that none of this matters at all, and everything is meaningless. This can throw a lot of people who grew up believing that you have a reason for being here for a loop.

1. *Why does Beauvoir think that we should become or practice existentialism?*

Beauvoir believes that we should study existentialism because it provides more freedom than was previously allowed — for example, if life is meaningless, then we should pursue whatever makes us happy, rather than just doing what we can do to appease a God.