**Readings for 20 April 2017**

PHIL242L111 Existentialism

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1. *How is the human condition marked by “ambiguity” for Beauvoir?*

Beauvoir believes that consciousness itself is ambiguous, in that we never fulfill either of our desires (desire for meaning in our own lives, or in our desire to create meaning for others). Anyone that offers concrete explanations on how to achieve these goals (religion, for example) is being disingenuous and we should rather go with existential hope for our future.

1. *Beauvoir claims that one can use Sartre’s notion of freedom, the idea that individuals ultimately define themselves, to define an ethics. One of the implications of such an ethics, for Beauvoir, is the rejection of external absolutes and values. Explain her argument for this claim.*

To claim to have an external source of absolutes and values is to avoid claiming responsibilities for one’s own actions and to “flee ambiguity”. Instead of doing things because they are right, you are doing things to achieve an end, and, in her eyes, that can lead to tyranny.

1. *Beauvoir maintains that existential ethics, an ethics of ambiguity is about “willing” one’s “freedom.” What does it mean, for Beauvoir, to will one’s freedom and how do individuals avoid doing this?*

Beauvoir believes that there are two types of freedom: innate freedom that is from being conscious, and a freedom from “willing one’s freedom”. To “will one’s freedom” is to recognize that you are free, and to take advantage of that, and to do things without morals — to avoid this, you recognize that you have morals and stick by them.