

***BEAUVOIRIAN THERAPY***

Treating Depression

Arising from Oppressive Conditions

Via Beauvoirian Ethics

***PART B***

***OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM***

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## Abstract

Beauvoirian Therapy is a new interdisciplinary model of psychotherapeutic treatment for depressed patients who have suffered from oppression. By bridging together philosophy, theory, literature and psychology, Beauvoirian Therapy is presented in a condensed and accessible psychological treatment format which can be synergized with other current psychotherapeutic techniques. This unprecedented approach, in bringing literature to an applied therapeutic model, has been formulated by synthesizing central themes of Beauvoir's thought, with particular emphasis on her philosophy drawn from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Beauvoir, 1947) and creating an applied model which can be adapted and modified. The themes are represented in quotations and are used as data. The treatment prompts and question segments have been inductively formulated to produce therapeutic explorative inferences to add relevant and pertinent factors to the explorative discussions. Beauvoirian Therapy is based on overarching Beauvoirian themes arranged and framed for a unique Beauvoirian approach to address modern-day issues of oppression.

## Acknowledgements

My interdisciplinary doctoral program had two distinct phases. The first stage primarily drew from studies in two departments, Psychiatry and Internal Medicine, and the second stage concentrated on the other two main departments, French and Psychology. I would like to thank members of both phases of my I.I.P. Ph.D.

During the first stage, Part A, the central focus was on dementia in the geriatric population. Although I investigated multi-infarct dementia as well as Lewy body dementia, I addressed management and treatment for patients with Alzheimer's and Alzheimer's-type dementia.

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**My dearest *Mãe and Pai*,**

**I dedicate this one to you.**

**I love you both beyond measure.**

## Introduction

Breaking the *conspiracy* of permissiveness, complacency, invisibility and silence...

French writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908 – 1986) is well known for her innovative work on existential philosophy and social egalitarian theories. Using a phenomenological approach, her work exposes imposed and abusive human subjugation and its harmful effects. Through an ethical<sup>1</sup> framework, she traces unprincipled and often illegal oppressive constraints, and outlines imperative reform that I will employ as the basis for a therapeutic treatment plan addressing depression caused by modern-day oppression.

Overcoming oppression was [...] at the foreground of Simone de Beauvoir's work. She was in a very special position, not only in that she managed to generate a feminist discourse at a time when this was still mostly

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<sup>1</sup> In Beauvoirian Therapy, the term 'ethics' and its variations refer to *moral philosophy* principles which defend natural human conditions and rights, as well as diversity, equality and freedom against harmful interpretations, accusations and/or acts (Anscombe, 1958).

taboo, but also in that she developed her own philosophy and made an important contribution to existential ethics.

(Van Deurzen, 2010, p. 123)

Oppression is the metaphysical imprisonment of an individual or a group of persons, thrust into a deterministic, fixed, subordinate and habitually futile essence<sup>2</sup>. That is to say, the oppressed are forced into the category of Other<sup>3</sup> (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Accordingly, we can oppress people “by acting upon their facticity<sup>4</sup>, by reducing them to things” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 99) and hence, by objectifying them (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

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<sup>2</sup> According to existentialist thinkers, existence has no predetermined essence. Each human is ontologically free to choose his or her actions and interactions in the world. Oppression therefore goes against this natural human condition and right.

<sup>3</sup> Beauvoir’s analysis focuses on the Hegelian notion of Other. ‘Otherness’ often entails the segregation and dehumanization of persons. The term ‘Other’ is used to include all oppressed persons: the Other may be an individual and/or an objectified group, as well as the aim of oppression and/or those already victimized.

<sup>4</sup> There are two aspects that can contribute to humans’ facticity: first, their previous choices that have shaped their identity, and secondly, their physical being. Focusing solely on these two aspects of humans is objectification (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Life imprisonment is the most horrible of punishments  
because it preserves existence in its pure facticity but  
forbids it all legitimation. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 31)

The confinement and objectification is executed through a malicious and manipulative exercise of power<sup>5</sup> over another and has destructive effects on those victimized (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Oppression is a universal crime against humanity that robs persons of individuality, equality and meaningfulness as well as their natural human condition and rights. It robs people of freedom<sup>6</sup> (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970; United Nations, 1948). Oppression is psychologically violent and a universal human rights violation (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970; United Nations, 1948; Nickel, 2010).

Oppression is never a natural occurrence: it is a man-made malevolent social<sup>7</sup> construct (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970; Podgórecki, 1993) stemming from existential bad

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<sup>5</sup> In Beauvoirian Therapy, the term ‘power’ refers to psychological operations including influence, control, suggested menace and/or physical force, despite the probable lack of worthiness of such power.

<sup>6</sup> With respect to the topic of oppression, the term ‘freedom’ is designated to metaphysical freedom. Metaphysical freedom is autonomy over deterministic and rigid rules and/or expectations. In a condition of freedom, with an open future, one can make unrestricted decisions based on free will (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).



faith<sup>8</sup>, which systematically targets and abuses human beings. Oppression blocks individuals from accomplishing one of the basic needs in human existence: pursuing meaningful endeavors (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). “It is transcendence<sup>9</sup> [...] condemned to fall uselessly back upon itself because it is cut off from its goals.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 81)

Oppression can be observed almost everywhere and, in one form or another, has always existed (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). This insidious form of abuse can happen to anyone. No one is ever completely safe (Soares, 1999) as anyone, at any given time, can find themselves struggling for liberty (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). In fact, community and workplace bullying is one of the most pressing and important health problems today (Soares, 1999; Sloan, Matyok, Schmitz & Short 2010).

Over time, various oppressive methods have emerged, as have the terms used to describe them, such as: psychological subjugation, harassment, discrimination, scapegoating, bullying, community undermining<sup>10</sup>, workplace mobbing<sup>11</sup> and other

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<sup>7</sup> In Beauvoirian Therapy, the terms ‘society’ and ‘social’ include all levels: community, workplace, family and dyadic constitutions.

<sup>8</sup> Bad faith describes the phenomenon where a human assumes damaging values that take on a hostile form of self-deception.

<sup>9</sup> Transcendence is a continual forward movement allowing one to go beyond conditions. A freedom can not will itself without willing itself as an indefinite movement (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 31).

varying types of emotional abuse. Bullying and other expressions to represent oppression are often used synonymously. Nevertheless, psychological mistreatment against victims can be executed in various modes, specifically by means of: rounding up allies against victims, villainizing, discrediting, excluding, isolating and silencing them, as well as slander, insinuations and innuendo (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Perpetrators of oppression typically aim at destroying their victims' liberty, meaning and transcendence. Oppressors<sup>12</sup> reduce an individual or group and create enemies among others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They employ hate in many capacities to harm, dehumanize and ruin lives (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970; Cortese, 2006). There is much "time and strength [the oppressor] squanders in liquidating, sublimating, transferring complexes, in talking about [the oppressed]" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 720), in silencing the truth and hiding the abuse. Often, the abusers transfer their

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<sup>10</sup> Community and/or social undermining refers to deliberate and sophisticated offenses aimed at damaging another's reputation, the ability to accomplish his or her goals, or the ability to create and maintain positive relationships (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Workplace mobbing refers to deliberate and sophisticated offenses, typically perpetrated by a group, aimed at damaging another's reputation, the ability to accomplish his or her goals, or the ability to create and maintain positive relationships (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> The term 'oppressor' includes individual abusers as well as a group of abusers in the community, at work and in the home.

actions onto their targets<sup>13</sup>. Oppressors try to defend their mistreatment of others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). However, it must be understood that oppression is an extremely “destructive process consisting of a succession of hostile statements and actions which, if taken in isolation, seem harmless, but whose constant repetition has pernicious effects.” (Leymann, 1996: p. 26-27)

Oppressors often try to align with, and falsely befriend, their victims’ family, friends and co-workers with a view to have them turn on the victims and assist in fulfilling the oppressor’s agenda; they use and abuse (Hershcovis, 2011). Oppressors promise rewards for those who become *allied* in their subjugation, until the *followers* are no longer needed (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Oppressors are inexorable: they obstinately persist to upset and *mutilate* (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

The evil and cruelty perpetrated by oppressors must be overcome and denounced (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). It is deliberate, perverse, offensive, destructive and a relentless form of health-harming abuse. The repeated persecution, discrediting and intimidation of individuals, the defection of witnesses, the silencing and concealing of the abuse: all have catastrophic physical and mental health effects (Dejours, 1998).

Current research confirms a significant reduction in the psychological wellbeing of victimized individuals, with commonly identified increased stress, anxiety and depression (Einarsen & Mikkelsen 2003). For many who have experienced oppression,

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<sup>13</sup> The term ‘target’ includes individuals as well as a group of targeted persons. The target may be the aim of oppression and/or those already victimized.

depression is a natural and common response to such persistent psychological violence (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Researchers have also identified the dearth of knowledge about the elevated risk of depression among oppressed groups as a serious problem and have underscored a need for improved early detection and intervention (Einarsen & Mikkelsen 2003). Research also suggests that a key component for the detection and treatment of oppressed patients suffering from depression is the analysis of the social context and psychosocial forces allowing for, and contributing to, oppressive conditions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970; Koss, Bailey, Yuan, Herrera & Lichter, 2003).

Based on her theoretical and philosophical foundation, Beauvoir investigates oppressive social phenomena as well as their impact on psychological and existential health. This thesis argues that the implications of Beauvoir's body of work can culminate in a treatment plan that I term *Beauvoirian Therapy*. Beauvoirian Therapy synthesizes Beauvoirian ethics and offers a new model with contemporary concepts for a functional role of Beauvoirian theory and philosophy in care delivery. "[T]he purpose of psychotherapy is to set people free." (May, 1981, p. 19) We begin with an analysis of the social conditions of the oppressed.

Although the appalling results of oppression lead to the dehumanization of both the oppressed and the oppressor, Beauvoirian Therapy is orientated specifically toward supporting therapeutic change for the victimized. It aims to support its patients in achieving the courage to express their individuality, the empowerment to seek equality and the sovereignty to create meaningful endeavors. Beauvoirian Therapy assists with the patients' transcendence from undignified conditions toward the absolute ethical value of

freedom. It insists on the acknowledgement of *existents by the same right* (Beauvoir, 1949) and aids in concretely claiming conditions and rights that are legally recognized (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947; 1949; 1970).

For decades Beauvoir's work has helped many individuals because it expressed them, as it told their story (Beauvoir, 1963). Psychiatrists have given Beauvoir's texts to their patients to read: individuals of varying socio-economic backgrounds who have experienced oppressive tyranny in the community and in the workplace have benefited from such reading. These patients have claimed that Beauvoir's writings have greatly helped them heal. Formerly objectified individuals reclaim subjectivity and freedom (Beauvoir, 1963).

Beauvoirian research and dissemination aims at universal principles for all humans and strives to educate and endorse ethics and respect for all individuals' conditions and rights. Based on Beauvoir's original premise vis-à-vis human ambiguity<sup>14</sup>, and *the truth of freedom*, a level of consciousness leading to the desire to improve oppressive conditions, becomes possible (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1963; 1970).

Beauvoirian Therapy applies Beauvoir's proposed ethical methods and presents an accessible, succinct and integrative approach to psychotherapy. Beauvoirian Therapy raises important considerations for mental health practitioners to potentially put into practice as a component of their service delivery. Drawing on Beauvoir's philosophy and

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<sup>14</sup> We are a non-defined entity, with a finite life in an infinite world, creating meaning and movement in our existence (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

theories, inspired by, but not limited to, social egalitarian as well as existential philosophy and phenomenology, Beauvoirian Therapy presents a framework for providing psychotherapy to patients experiencing depression arising from damaging oppressive conditions.

[I]t is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law. (United Nations, 1948) <sup>15</sup>

This new patient-centered approach encourages consciousness of oppression and promotes the desire, decisiveness and courage for the individual's self-directed revolt against such universal human rights violations.

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<sup>15</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. Res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc. A/810, at Art. 21, 28, 29, and Prmb. (3).

## **Chapter 1**

### **Scope of the Problem**

Psychiatric and psychological care is a central and vital component of our healthcare system for individuals with varying degrees of depression. Since most traditional psychotherapeutic treatment plans rely on diagnostic criteria, much of the therapeutic emphasis is on treating the patients' symptoms and potential maladaptive behaviour. In the case of reactive unipolar depression, as the effect of oppressive conditions, interventions and rehabilitation care models are restricted (Schriner, 2001; Winter 2003).

Although over the past few decades there have been significant advances in mental health research, medical sciences have often been accused of neglecting the social scientific importance of emotional distress. One of the main criticisms of the Disease model, which does not sufficiently incorporate psychosocial considerations, is that it remains focused on psychopathologies. Thus, it is unable to provide an overarching framework for an all-inclusive understanding and subsequent treatment of depression in unhealthy social situations (Green 2002; Furman & Bender, 2003; Morely, 2008).

Previously, the question of whether or not mental health could be affected by life events may have been an area of contention (Beauvoir, 1949). However, there is now little doubt that psychological manifestations are influenced to a considerable extent by social factors (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970; Burr, 1995). Continuing to develop and refine

models of mental health is perhaps more important than ever, particularly with such high prevalence and incidence rates of modern-day bullying (Soares, 1999).

Bullied people suffer. They suffer from being reduced and from the grief of isolation, devaluation and dehumanization (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). With respect to oppression and its ensuing depression, Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first philosophers to have delved extensively into the subject. Beauvoir contests deterministic and collectivist psychological treatments, because she believes it is necessary to recognize that an individual's existence is lived in different ways according to his or her social context. Thus, for Beauvoir, the importance of social relativity remains an integral factor in investigating and understanding the social responsibility for certain depressions. Finally, when considering treatment approaches, it is essential to include the manner in which various psychosocial forces contribute to the disorder (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

The characteristics of the social construct<sup>16</sup> of depression reflect cultural philosophies and values along with the ways of thinking about others and, most importantly, about one's self. These psychological issues are manifested further by the manner in which pathological and maladaptive behavior patterns are imposed on the individual by his or her environment (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir's work offers detailed edification on the roles numerous and diverse societies have played in reducing people to Other, and therefore oppressing them. Humans, not genetics, decide who is Other. Also, the ways in which we define Other are

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<sup>16</sup> This concept essentially refers to the process by which an individual learns socially determined and accepted ideologies and norms.



simultaneously reflections of societal ideologies, which in turn, designate who is bullied, undermined, mobbed, psychologically abused and who struggles to attain metaphysical liberty. Others are *unnaturally* oppressed (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Oppression imposes an imbalance of power on behalf of the oppressor, and violently thrusts the Other into a constructed inferior and immutable position. As a result of this artificially created and maintained situation, aimed at subordinating the Other, the individuality, equality and complete existence of the Other is hindered (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The situation exacerbates itself, as the individual may have never adopted strategies to deal with such mistreatment and therefore does not have the means of adapting to this new violent and destructive condition alone (Beauvoir, 1970).

Beauvoir reminds us repeatedly that humans are not merely biological beings but are also conscious beings, and therefore the categorization of the Other and its reduction to facticity are primordial in understanding oppression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Alterity, typically hidden and silenced, is most often justified and declared as inherent. This facilitates a collective attitude toward further maintaining the marginalization of the Other. However, humans do not live to fulfill predetermined, uniform and secondary fixed roles, and above all, humans do not exist to be relegated into an insignificant essence. We are born to create meaning and who we will become (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Ignoring these hypotheses makes it difficult for certain therapeutic practices to address depression caused by oppression (Beauvoir, 1949). The oppressed continue to be depressed (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Oppression causes depression issues for those being ceaselessly denied their freedom (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970) and “every trauma that we experience shatters our sense

of coherence and meaning.” (Serlin & Cannon, 2004, p. 314) A significant challenge facing psychotherapists is how to address the suffering of patients experiencing depression and angst in the social and existential realms of the individual’s oppressive experiences (Das, 1998; Johnson, 2012). A major psychotherapeutic task is to understand and regard the profound sadness of the oppressed individual and address the social culpability and responsibility for such abominable suffering (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970) by confronting the systems of oppressive abuse (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Beauvoir proves that the phenomenological approach is vital in dealing with depression caused by oppression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Oppression gives a real role to evil, and it is this, perhaps, which makes its reality so dismal (Beauvoir, 1947). Oppressed persons have an accurate perception of their lived experience and social condition (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970; Amador, 2004), and when individuals understand the *seriousness of evil* that they have experienced, they *react* with depression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). This presents the *depressive realism* (DR) model of depression (Alloy & Abramson, 1988) whereby depressed, but not necessarily *clinically* depressed, patients are seen to be more innately aware than completely non-depressed persons. One may conclude that normal non-depressed persons have some dearth of insight, some psychological blind spots, which are necessary for normal emotional functioning (Ghaemi, 2007). It is through this type of *depression* that one can achieve deeper consciousness and become acutely aware of one’s oppression and potentially seek to treat one’s condition (Sartre, 1948; Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Depression is highly variable. Under consideration for Beauvoirian Therapy are both reactive depression and/or acute reactive depression, arising from varying forms of oppression, with symptoms as defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Depression typically refers to a mood consisting of certain feelings, including sadness, discouragement, meaninglessness, subjugation, isolation and even despair. Symptoms of depression can include: emotional symptoms, motivational symptoms, behavioural symptoms, cognitive symptoms and somatic symptoms. There are various types of depression with the principal delineation made by the presence of psychotic symptoms<sup>17</sup> or lack thereof, bipolar and unipolar, respectively (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Depression may be the patient's main health issue (primary depression) or may be associated with another illness (secondary depression). Depression can also be chronic or acute. Patients who suffer from chronic depression may also have other psychological problems. Acute depression is typically the result of a relatively recent and negative lived experience, hence often categorized as reactive depression or acute reactive depression, depending on its permanence. Negative experiences that can cause reactive depression include substance withdrawal, the onset of an illness, a traumatic loss and victimization. These issues are of vital importance, as reactive depression can affect all aspects of a patient's life and care, and decrease his or her quality of life. In addition, patients with depression have an increased risk of disability, mortality and impaired social functioning (Blazer, 2003; Williams, Clouse & Lustman, 2006).

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<sup>17</sup> Psychotic symptoms may include delusions and hallucinations.

Beauvoir is very current in her approach to depression in oppressed populations (Kérisit, 2001). The notion that oppression leads to depression is buttressed by other psychological theorists from Mead (1949) to Burns *et al.* (1995). In fact, there are *mark of oppression* theorists (Foster, 1993), such as Dubois (1993) and Chodoff (1997) who focus specifically on the psychological damage created by lived experiences of oppression. The oppressed have *learned helplessness* (Seligman, 1991). Akin to Beauvoir, *social role* scientists report that the relegated roles into which the oppressed are driven become prescriptive (Eagly, 1987). The oppressed are silenced by their own thoughts and fears in order to maintain ‘harmonious’ relationships, a premise later developed into the *self-silencing* theory by Jack (1991). Societal interpretations of the falsely socially-constructed notion of the Other are damaging and cause depression due to hopelessness and despair (Cox, Abramson, Devine, & Hollon, 2012). As with Beauvoir, contemporary researcher Burstow (1992) states that depression is consequently the strongest protest humanly possible against oppressive and dehumanizing conditions.

Decades following Beauvoir’s work on oppression and her fight for balanced and mutually respectful relations, oppression is still unfortunately of great concern. Researchers continue to investigate oppression with relatively recent emphasis on the commonly used term ‘bullying’, in addition to different emerging methods such as undermining (Crossley, 2009) and mobbing (Heinz Leymann, 1990). Appallingly, oppression is everywhere: in families, in the community, on the internet and in the workplace (LutgenSandvik, 2009). The complexity and upsurge of the bullying phenomena is extraordinary, so much so that a national study by Lee and Brotheridge (2006) report that 40% of Canadian workers experience bullying every week.

Beauvoir's philosophy and theories still speak to these very issues today. As the world evolves, so do forms of evil, such as oppression. Many forms of abuse continue and other forms have emerged.

Our age is one of transition, in which the normal channels for utilizing the daimonic are denied; and such ages tend to be times when the daimonic is expressed in its most destructive form. (May, 1969, p. 130)

Expanding Beauvoir's ethics into an applicable format, I built upon her increasingly relevant ethics and developed an applicable model to address depression caused by modern-day oppression.

What can we hope? [...] It may be that Beauvoir's works are propelled by this question and the desire to answer it in ways that bring us closer to the possibilities of justice while remaining cognizant of the risks of freedom. (Bergoffen, 2001, p. 87)

Beauvoirian Therapy consequently aims to address the aforementioned critical concerns by offering a new way of conceptualizing depression caused by oppression from the Beauvoirian perspective.

## Chapter 2

### Beauvoirian Philosophy

Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy is concerned with humanistic and, more specifically, existential philosophy. This school of thought addresses a number of classic philosophical questions relating to existence, meaning, choice, freedom, responsibility, anxiety and death. From the 1940s to the 1970s, along with her French contemporaries, Beauvoir delves extensively into these key issues.

[W]hile resting on a tradition of philosophical problems and concepts, the proponents of existential thought also want to be a "living attitude" towards the problems of its contemporary world. (Björk, 2008, p. 26)

Beauvoir begins her philosophical journey in *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* (1944) by presenting the following overarching questions: Should one act? How should one act? And why should one act? In *Pyrrhus and Cinéas*, Beauvoir also sets a philosophical foundation for three of her future texts: *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), *The Second Sex* (1949) and *The Coming of Age* (1970). She examines the principles of freedom, responsibility, interconnected relationships and the ambiguity of existence. Beauvoir also questions whether or not one should intervene in conditions of ethical and political impropriety.

Although, given the socio-historical context of her writing, Beauvoir speaks against such issues as colonialism and war oppression, her various existential concepts and analyses conceived in *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* are intended to have a greater and more general application:

We do not want to examine the contents of the project here, but, its original and free character being posited, we are only trying to define the general and formal conditions of its existence. (Beauvoir, 1944, p. 115)

Beauvoir's key ideas stem from investigations of the overall human condition and speak to greater issues which are revealed in her future work and which will ultimately form the basis for her ethics.

In 1947, motivated by Jean-Paul Sartre's unrealized project to develop an existential ethics, Beauvoir presents her philosophical ideas in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. She addresses existential concepts and seeks the unearthing of a meaningful life for each individual living in the midst of other interconnected individuals. Beauvoir's philosophy does not, however, present "a prescriptive theory or set of ethical norms." (O'Flynn, 2009, p. 78) Rather, her philosophy establishes an ethical foundation that empowers and encourages autonomy in the creation of meaning in our lived experiences, and also supports and defends freedom, a universally human right<sup>18</sup>. Her "[e]thics does not furnish

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<sup>18</sup> "Man is free; [and] he finds his law in his very freedom." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156)

recipes any more than do science and art. One can merely propose methods.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 134)

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir underscores the importance of the notion that our essence is not pre-determined because it is created and continually recreated by our choices, speech and actions.

[I]t is up to each one to make himself a lack of more or less various, profound, and rich aspects of being. What is (sic) called vitality, sensitivity, and intelligence are not ready-made qualities, but a way of casting oneself into the world and of disclosing being. [...] The reward for these spontaneous qualities issues from the fact that they make significances and goals appear in the world. They discover reasons for existing. (Beauvoir, 1947, pp. 41-42)

Since there is no inherent fixed purpose established in human existence, what gives our actions meaning lies in whether one works to open the future for oneself and other persons involved (Arp, 2001).

Stemming from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) philosophical work on phenomenology, Beauvoir’s in-depth analysis on ambiguity identifies the self-other relationship as an essential concept in her ethics. It is from the dialectic between the self and the other that one of several manifestations of the most fundamental characteristic of human existence ensues: ambiguity.

“[I]ndividualism [...] is opposed to the totalitarian doctrines” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156) since there is no inherent fixed predetermined human condition. It is because one’s



condition is ambiguous that one can express their individuality. How one thinks and chooses to act gives meaning to their existence. For Beauvoir, ambiguity is, in fact, the foundation of being human and of individualism.

Beauvoirian ethics is built on ambiguity that bears no certainties within it, except for the acceptance of the possibility of either failure or success (O'Flynn, 2009, p. 75). Beauvoir steadily claims that philosophy must recognize this vital issue in order to contend with the reality of life's givens.

As long as there have been men and they have lived, they have all felt this tragic ambiguity of their condition, but as long as there have been philosophers and they have thought, most of them have tried to mask it. They have striven to reduce mind to matter, or to reabsorb matter into mind, or to merge them within a single substance.

(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 7)

The ambiguity of the human condition is that we are both matter and mind, facticity and consciousness. Beauvoir maintains that at our core, we are composed of binary opposites such that we are equally subject and object, transcendence and immanence<sup>19</sup>, a unique inwardness and a common externality, individuality and universality. Furthermore, we stand out from the masses while blending into the masses,

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<sup>19</sup> Immanence is the opposite of transcendence: it is what maintains life, but does not go beyond the physical necessities of life.

we are also natural existents while being socially constructed existents (Sandford, 2006). Humans are on both ends of reciprocity in the mutually dependent relationship between self and others (Moore, 2008) and one should be acutely aware of the lived paradox that is one's ambiguity.

Beauvoir rejects the religious and philosophical regimes where one aspect of our condition is predetermined as the expected characteristic to be selected.

At the present time there still exist many doctrines which choose to leave in the shadow certain troubling aspects of a too complex situation. But their attempt to lie to us is in vain. Cowardice doesn't pay. Those reasonable metaphysics, those consoling ethics with which they would like to entice us only accentuate the disorder from which we suffer. Men of today seem to feel more acutely than ever the paradox of their condition. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 8-9)

Our ontology is dual-natured and our binary opposites are equally weighted. Thus, to be true to our human condition, we must not favor one trait over its opposing trait and we must keep the contrasting aspects in constant balance.

To declare that existence [...] is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed, that it must be constantly won. [...] It is because man's condition is ambiguous that he seeks, through failure and outrageousness, to save his existence. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 129)

It is the inherent ambiguity of our existence which expresses its dualities without privileging one polarity over the other and which keeps these opposite elements in a continual tension that brings awareness to perpetual options and movement. Being acutely aware of our dualities ensures that we will never sink into a comfortable security that would allow us to let our guard down and forget that we must question every choice at all times. Ethics reside “in the painfulness of an indefinite questioning.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 133) At every instant, maintaining a balance, we move from the possibility of immanence to being better prepared for facing tension and opposing choices.

The drama of original choice is that it goes on moment by moment for an entire lifetime, that it occurs without reason, before any reason, that freedom is there. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 40)

There are no set rules for being. Continually maintaining our natural tension prepares us to create meaning in our moving existence. This struggle for balance, the tension, compels us to be constantly aware of our dueling forces and prevents us from settling into a fixed certainty or a fixed essence. Beauvoir states that there is “a perpetual tension to keep being at a certain distance, [...] and to assert oneself as a freedom.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 23-24) The way in which we deal with the tension of our dual nature is how we are able to make choices: it is how we are free.

Ambiguity is subjective transcendence.

Since we do not succeed in fleeing it, let us therefore try to look the truth in the face. Let us try to assume our

fundamental ambiguity. It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 9)

Ambiguity is ever present in human existence. It is our human condition of ambiguity which allows us to know that we are free to decide at all times. “The fundamental ambiguity of the human condition will always open up to men the possibility of opposing choices.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 118) Hence, an ethics based on ambiguity is an ethics based on the freedom of choice.

We live as free consciousness, but we also exist in the flesh, influenced and targeted by uncontrollable forces. Human ambiguity presents choice, risk, doubt and possibilities (Beauvoir, 1947). Each individual is unique and occupies his or her place in humanity and yet can be viewed as nothing more than an object for others (Arp, 2001). Society shares an intersubjectivity with the individual, who can be simultaneously present and absent. Similarly, one’s consciousness depends on the human body to continue to exist in and engage with the world. It is as a result of the joint consciousness-body entity that one, who recognizes oneself as consciousness, can again, in turn, be reduced to merely his or her flesh. Hence, for Beauvoir, intersubjectivity must be understood as both embedded within one’s social existence as well as one’s physical existence. This is what Beauvoir calls the lived *situated* experience.

All of our lived experiences, our psychologies, our understandings of our physical and mental capabilities and gifts – everything that we know and experience about

ourselves – is filtered through our situatedness. (Andrew, 2003, p. 38)

According to Beauvoir, the ambiguity of human existence is moreover exemplified when one who is “a sovereign and unique subject” is for others “nothing more than an individual in the collectivity on which he depends.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 7) Individuals who are degraded in such a manner are relegated to the position of Other. The Other is, in turn, defined as inferior. The oppressed do not have equality: they are the Other. Otherness predetermines a fixed and inferior essence and disallows choice for individuality and the creation of meaningful endeavors toward an open future.

The meaning of one’s existence emerges through an active acknowledgement of the ambiguities of a life towards death, the temporality of past, present and future and the inter-subjective relationship of self and other. (O’Flynn, 2009, p. 75)

For Beauvoir, meaning is presented in the intersection of the plans and projects of individuals working together to fulfill goals. In addition, the ideal undertaking is based on a person’s transcendence as well as an effort to create and maintain an open future for others.

Passion is converted to genuine freedom only if one destines his existence to other existences through the being [...] at which he aims, without hoping to entrap it in [a] destiny. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 67)

Since there is no predetermined path established for an individual, human interdependence can effectively and significantly change the course and conditions for one's lived experience. Although the future is open, it is also bound by others. Awareness of the paradox of existential ambiguity may sensitize a free subjectivity to the socially constructed condition that is effectively blocking his or her freedom.

Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence. The man who seeks to justify his life must want freedom itself absolutely and above everything else.

(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 24)

Thus, Beauvoir's ethics is constructed with freedom as the moral ideal. As Kristana Arp confirms, as an existentialist, there is no other value upon which Beauvoir should base her ethics (Arp, 2001): "[One] must first will freedom within [oneself] and universally." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 78) That is to say, one should primarily act to defend and support freedom as a universal principle.

Beauvoir insists that, although we are all born ontologically free<sup>20</sup> (Sartre, 1943), our natural freedom has its limits. It is our *moral freedom* that can be jeopardized by those who label us, those who reduce us to a subordinate level of objectivity and those who impede us in our attempt to establish a liberated and open future (Beauvoir, 1947).

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<sup>20</sup> Every man is originally free, in the sense that he spontaneously casts himself into the world (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 25).

This begs the question: How can one, who is born free, not be free? As Beauvoir explains, although one is born a free subjectivity and transcendent being, if one is being sabotaged and blocked from his or her trajectory and goals, one then lacks the concrete conditions in which to exercise freedom and choice. (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970)

To will oneself free is to effect the transition from nature to morality by establishing a genuine freedom on the original upsurge of our existence... To will oneself moral and to will oneself free are one and the same decision. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 24)

Moral freedom is “the conscious affirmation of one’s ontological freedom.” (Björk, 2008, p. 41) It is the decision to *choose* freedom that allows moral freedom to rise above one’s natural freedom and facticity. Hence, choosing freedom is, in fact, deciding to live authentically<sup>21</sup>, electing how we create ourselves (O’Flynn, 2009) and exercising the decision to choose. However, in so doing, one assumes the responsibility that comes with moral freedom. Although we are free, our actions ought to be principled because we are nevertheless always accountable for our deeds. “[T]o be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future.”

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<sup>21</sup> For Beauvoir, authenticity is the polarity of *bad faith*. Authenticity implies being true to one’s unique individual character without hurting or imposing on another’s freedom. The requisite for living authentically is making choices that, perhaps unique from the masses, are within moral and ethical parameters based on truth, positive meaningfulness, individuality, equality, transcendence and free will.

(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 91) In addition, our liability surpasses the relationship between the individual and the world; it extends to our interpersonal relationships (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Moral freedom comes with the burden of being accountable for reciprocal and respectful environments (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). To achieve complete freedom, one must take responsibility not only for one's own freedom, but also for universal freedom<sup>22</sup>. This is accomplished by means of working to create conditions under which others can attain and develop their own freedom. Hence, the accountability that accompanies moral freedom extends to others and assumes the form of ethical universal conscientiousness (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947).

[Beauvoir's approach] is not solipsistic, since the individual is defined only by his relationship to the world and to other individuals; he exists only by transcending himself, and his freedom can be achieved only through the freedom of others. He justifies his existence by a movement which, like freedom, springs from his heart but which leads outside of him (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156).

The responsibility of another's freedom is an individual as well as a relational result of understanding freedom as the fundamental characteristic of humanity and its ethical ideal (O'Flynn, 2009). For this reason, Beauvoir calls for morally required conscious action to

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<sup>22</sup> "For a freedom wills itself genuinely only by willing itself as an indefinite movement through the freedom of others." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 90)



assure that concrete external situations required for maintaining transcendent subjectivity are not interrupted.

“[F]reedom always appears as a movement of liberation” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 32) and cannot be limited to specific individuals alone. If so, asymmetrical conditions are produced whereby oppression can be created and perpetuated. Arp (1999) elucidates that the requirements for achieving complete moral freedom are what lead to a negative injunction. As Beauvoir states, to achieve freedom it is necessary to “reject oppression for oneself and others.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156) Genuinely free individuals not only should not oppress others, but should understand how their freedom diametrically affects others’ freedom, and hence work to realize the conditions under which others can develop their own genuine freedom (Arp, 2001).

With freedom as the contextual underpinning for Beauvoir’s philosophy, she brings awareness of oppressive conditions. Oppressors do not consider the freedom of others. “Oppression robs people of the opportunity to develop moral freedom.” (Arp, 2001, p. 73) Hence, one must accept the responsibility that begins with universal liberties. One must also understand that:

It is not enough to theorise that the other is ‘naturally’ inferior or that their oppression is not of my making. One is responsible for the other whether one has inflicted any wrong on the other or not. (O’Flynn, 2009, p. 74)

To fulfill the requirements of moral freedom, each person should consciously and actively contribute to creating concrete conditions where oppression would not be possible. “[T]he good of an individual or a group of individuals requires that it be taken

as an absolute end of our action” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 142), “one does not exist without doing something.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156) One should take a position and consciously act upon one’s conviction.

For this, Beauvoir prompts the acknowledgement of others also as transcendent subjectivities, and she reminds her readers that “[t]he me-others relationship is as indissoluble as the subject-object relationship.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p.72) For Beauvoir, while self-other relationships are a requisite for the realization of one’s freedom, one’s actual interactions and interdependence with others may, in fact, stifle freedom (Bredlau, 2011). Though one is free, one experiences ambiguity, a tension, due to one’s connection with another who may be inauthentically free. Such individuals attempt to remove the individuality and equality of Others. Inauthentic individuals annihilate subjectivity and transcendence, thereby threatening freedom (Scholz, 2000). We are all interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, the experience of an individual depends greatly on the individual’s intersubjective encounters.

It is this interdependence which explains why oppression is possible and why it is hateful. As we have seen, my freedom, in order to fulfill itself, requires that it emerge into an open future: it is other men who open the future to me, [...] but if, instead of allowing me to participate in this constructive movement, they oblige me to consume my transcendence in vain, if they keep me below the level which they have conquered and on the basis of which new conquests will be achieved then they are cutting me off

from the future, they are changing me into a thing.

(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82)

Only humans can rob others from the meaning of their acts and from their freedom (Beauvoir, 1947). Only humans can create inequality in relationships and reduce another to facticity. Putting oneself over another is to create a condition of oppression. What makes oppressors successful is that they mystify the constructed asymmetrical condition and present it as natural (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

With freedom as Beauvoir's underpinning value, and with an understanding of the characteristics of existential ambiguity as well as its continual confrontation with responsibility and choice, Beauvoir presents *The Second Sex* in 1949 and *The Coming of Age* in 1970. Although Beauvoir is arguably best known for her feminist theory stemming from *The Second Sex*, she states clearly that reducing anyone to objectification is oppressive. For this reason, two decades after writing *The Second Sex*, she presents the same principles applied to a different group and depicts different forms of oppression.

*The Second Sex* and *The Coming of Age* equally present an applied and materialized analysis of Beauvoir's ethical framework elaborated in *Ethics of Ambiguity*. Beauvoir battles against oppression and introduces phenomenological representations of both being interconnected with the world as well as with others:

While *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* deal, in the main, with self/other relations between individual consciousnesses, *The Second Sex* [and *The*

*Coming of Age* deal] with self/other relations between two  
'groups' of people. (O'Flynn, 2009, p. 71)

Beauvoir discloses the obstruction of freedom for both women and older adults, and emphasizes that the same philosophical grid can be utilized to investigate any oppressed individual or group. Beauvoir expands a practical application of her ethical foundation and confirms their applicability to distinct and emerging forms of oppression.

Beauvoir characterizes the nature of the human experience and frames an ethics that provides a novel way of understanding the self, the other, and their respective relationships. Although we are alone in the world, we are also interconnected with other individuals. We all have a reciprocal relationship, and to keep the rapport in balance, we must mutually respect, protect and be responsible for one another's freedom. Hence, there is no justification to oppress since the objectification of any individual or group is socially created and maintained by *shameless lies* that must be demystified. On the subject of freedom, "[one] must take sides for or against, and the foreign wills thereby become allied or hostile." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82)

In both *The Second Sex* and *The Coming of Age*, Beauvoir demonstrates numerous negative effects that oppression has on the Other, such as reduced physical and emotional health, reduced self-esteem, cognitive decline and depression. Beauvoir writes:

It is a strange experience for an individual who feels  
himself to be an autonomous and transcendent subject, an  
absolute, to discover inferiority in himself as a fixed and  
preordained essence: it is a strange experience for whoever

regards himself as the One to be revealed to himself as  
otherness, alterity. (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 297)

One is an ontologically free subjectivity and when one's freedom to *become* is blocked, the result can be internalized oppression manifesting itself as bewilderment and various forms of depression. Nothing is more depressing than an oppressed individual being depersonalized (Beauvoir, 1949), being devalued, being treated negatively and being blocked from his or her own free future (Beauvoir, 1970). What Beauvoir reveals is clear: oppression is emotionally absorbed, causing intense dejection, abominable suffering and profound depression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1967; 1970).

Depression presents itself as a manifestation of an inner insurrection and can be the impetus to surpass the given (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). It is here that "ambiguity can not fail to appear on the scene; it is felt by the victim, and his revolt or his complaints also make it exist for his tyrant." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 153) When the present appears as facticity, [t]he moment of subjectivity therein vividly asserts itself, in its positive form (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 64)

But revolt, insofar as it is pure negative movement, remains abstract. It is fulfilled as freedom only by returning to the positive, that is, by giving itself a content through action, escape, political struggle, revolution. Human transcendence then seeks, with the destruction of the given situation, the whole future which will flow from its victory. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 31)

With Beauvoirian ethics, based on human ambiguity, choices aiming at an open future become possible, subjectivity can be claimed for a meaningful, free and transcendent future (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

[T]o will man free is to will there to *be* being, it is to will the disclosure of being in the joy of existence; in order for the idea of liberation to have a concrete meaning, the joy of existence must be asserted in each one, at every instant; the movement toward freedom assumes its real, flesh and blood figure in the world by thickening into pleasure, into happiness. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 135)

By experiencing existential struggles we can find happiness (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Because of our human ambiguity, we can also juxtapose meaninglessness and intentionality, complacency and vitality, immanence and transcendence, determinism and freedom. On account of an ethics of ambiguity, we can live authentically (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir answers her own original questions in *Pyrrhus and Cinéas*: Should one act? How should one act? And why should one act? Beauvoir's answers are clear: Yes, one should act. One should act to preserve one's freedom and the freedom of others. And one should act because people are being bullied and are thus depressed. Beauvoir's action is a call to get to the heart of the matter in order for any significant and lasting change to occur, by presenting her *Ethics of Ambiguity*: an ethics of freedom.

## Chapter 3

### Literature Review

Since Freud's revolutionary notion of psychotherapeutic practice was introduced in his Psychoanalytic model, it has been estimated that there have been a few hundred types of psychotherapy modalities offered to mental health practitioners and their patients. Although, in actuality, these may represent relatively few approaches with highlighted variations, this nevertheless reflects the constant need to find psychotherapeutic measures to enhance mental health service delivery by focusing on patients' unaddressed mental health predicaments.

Recently, an inspirational existentially-based psychotherapy named *Dignity Therapy* emerged to address end-of-life care issues for oncology patients. Dignity Therapy draws on fundamental existential principles to aid in preserving patients' meaning of life, comfort and overall dignity (Chochinov, Hack, Hassard, Kristjanson, McClement & Harlos, 2005). Much like Adler's interpretation of Nietzsche's existential philosophical teachings to create 'Individual psychology' (Adler, 1925), this design is the foundation of Beauvoirian Therapy with Beauvoir's philosophy as the motivating framework with which to deconstruct oppressive diseased conditions and provide options for healing depression arising from various forms of oppression.

Although Beauvoirian Therapy is created as an individual treatment that will interface with other traditional therapies, it aims to address specific mental health

concerns by offering a novel, integrative, individualized method of treating depression caused by oppression. Beauvoirian Therapy applies theory and philosophy to help the patient understand the human predicament and is intended for a specific patient population: the oppressed patient experiencing depression. It is a time-limited, step-care treatment carefully and inductively created by using Beauvoirian philosophical and theoretical interpretations. This model is for depressed patients who meet Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) criteria for reactive, unipolar, nonpsychotic depression and/or who self-identify as depressed. With respect to the therapists, they should possess training in psychotherapeutic practice or an understanding of the overarching tenets of Beauvoirian ethics, theories and philosophy as well as the ability to teach Beauvoirian principles. In addition, along with being empowering and encouraging, Beauvoirian therapists should also display compassion and optimism.

The starting point of Beauvoirian Therapy may be traced back to different psychotherapeutic modalities and to the paucities in treatment options which currently remain unaddressed in treating depression in the oppressed population. Under a brief evaluation in this review are the following three main theoretical approaches:

- 1) Psychoanalytic
- 2) Cognitive Behavioral Therapeutic
- 3) Humanistic – Existential



## Psychoanalytic Approach

With its conceptual roots dating back to the 1890s, Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic approach (1891) was conceivably the first modality for effectively employing various verbal and non-verbal techniques between a mental health practitioner and his or her patient to improve the patient's psychological well-being. Psychoanalysis is performed with a focus on attaining insight of past and present unconscious processes to reduce psychosis and repair the patient's psyche.

Psychoanalysis has been proven effective in treating a range of psychopathologies and a variety of psychological forces that elicit mental disturbances. One of the main premises in Psychoanalytic theory is that human thought and behavior are principally *determined* by irrational, unconscious sex-linked drives developed through experiences from infancy to early childhood (Freud, 1932). The permeating sexual associations are established by events from the formative years and are therefore deep-rooted.

Psychological defense mechanisms greatly impede bringing these drives to the conscious level, causing conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. This conflict may result in psychological issues such as neurosis, anxiety and depression (Freud, 1930).

In the psychoanalytic approach, the treatment for the effects of the internal psychological tension is to bring the unconscious into consciousness through guided psychotherapeutic modalities. However, Psychoanalysis continues to be denounced on numerous fronts. It is excessively retrospective as it considers the infantile sexed state responsible for most emotional problems (Perls, 1969). Moreover, even if the body does send us signals, they are indistinct (Beauvoir, 1970). It has also been argued that Psychoanalysis should be more concerned with the patient's current situation and inner

conflicts than with infantile gendered origins (Horney, 1945). As well, it seems as if, for psychoanalysts, the essential was missed (Jaspers, 1955) such as issues regarding the human ontological condition, individualism and the future (Sartre, 1948). Adler (1929) also took issue with Freud because he saw the deficiency of a system that fails to explain human life. Freud's conception of man mainly focuses on sexual stratification and sexual urges rather than on the individual's motives, purpose and meaningfulness (Beauvoir, 1949).

The psychoanalyst discovers a meaning even in abortive acts and attacks of hysteria. But in order for this meaning to justify the transcendence which discloses it, it must itself be founded. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 25)

Speculative psychoanalytic interpretation formulates the conscious phenomenon as the realization of reductionist and misogynistic repressed sexual desires by the patient (Beauvoir, 1947). Without showing much concern for the individual's destiny (Beauvoir, 1949), it is as if Freud concentrated on the sick half of individuals, and we must now examine the healthy half (Maslow, 1968). Freud defines human beings as intrinsically unstable, insatiable and antisocial. However, these are not primal manifestations but neurotic responses to adverse social conditions (Horney, 1945).

In an oppressive social condition, the psychoanalytic framework does not guide the patient to achieve awareness of asymmetrical conditions. Moreover, it accepts the concepts of *otherness* and oppressive subject/object relations (Moi, 1994). The treatment that is meant to cure becomes destructive since it fails to explain why the patient remains Other: it does not offer a treatment plan for human emotions stemming from oppression,

and it robs humans of their choice and freedom (Beauvoir, 1949). Within a psychoanalytic treatment plan, the reduction of the patient to absolute objectification results in the patient remaining in an oppressive condition.

Interiorizing the unconscious and the whole psychic life, the very language of psychoanalysis suggests that the drama of the individual unfolds within him or her; such words as *complex*, *tendency* and so on, make that implication. But life is a relation to the world, and individuals define themselves by making their own choices through the world about them. We must therefore turn towards the world to find answers for the questions with which we are concerned. In particular, psychoanalysis fails to explain why persons are *Other* (Beauvoir, 1949).

The psychoanalytic approach is a deterministic, reductionist, depersonalized, judgmental and ultimately a harmful one to patients suffering with depression caused by oppression (Beauvoir, 1949). “While psychoanalysis may thus be said to be scientifically alive, it is currently hardly well” (Grünbaum, 1984, p. 228) with its embarrassing flexibility on a basis of rigid concepts (Beauvoir, 1949) and therefore cannot adequately assist in the oppressed patient’s mental health and wellbeing.

### Cognitive Behavioral Approach

The second major psychotherapeutic modality stemmed primarily from behaviorism and climaxed with the integration of cognitive approaches. With a focus on empirical evidence both in theory as well as process, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has progressed from Edward L. Thorndike’s initial concepts to its established

approach as an effective and beneficial psychotherapeutic modality (Thase, Bowler & Harden, 1991).

As suggested by its name, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is based on combining Behavioral Therapy principles dating back as early as the 1920s, with Cognitive Therapy principles from the 1960s, at which point Behavioral Therapy was gaining popularity among practitioners. Today, CBT is arguably the predominant treatment for depression.

CBT is useful for patients who have difficulties with distortions and inaccurate cognitive functioning. According to the CBT theory, our thoughts directly drive our feelings and those feelings, in turn, drive our actions (Burns, 1999). In CBT, the therapist applies problem-solving and coping skills as cognitive restructuring modalities (Dobson, 1988) to mold the patient's view of external reality (Muñoz et al, 2000). Aiding patients in changing their maladaptive cognitive process will therefore change their dysfunctional behavior.

A limitation of CBT becomes apparent when identifying what is and what is not adaptive in certain populations (Hays, 2001). Without an objective standard, what is said to be maladaptive or *faulty* in CBT is a subjective judgment made by the therapist directing the patient to explore *healthy* changes (Hunter, 2009). What is more, the acceptable varies from place to place and over time (Beauvoir, 1949).

It is not enough in fact to draw up a list of behaviour patterns, of drives and inclinations, it is necessary also to decipher them; that is, it is necessary to know how to question them (Sartre, 1956, p. 568).

Working toward value-imposed norms through CBT would be inappropriate as it would drive the patient to conform to unnatural and constructed ideologies (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970), while not considering the social conditions of the individual (Hays, 2001).

The so-called psychological or empirical ethics manage to establish themselves only by introducing surreptitiously some flaw within the manthing which they have first defined. (Beauvoir, 1947, p.10)

In the case of oppression, being able to function within tyranny is nothing but displaying false harmony and is therefore inauthentic and a harmful existence (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). Oppressed patients have no defective cognitions to remove, as the patients are likely feeling the effects of their condition. However, the individual may be unhealthy due to their unhealthy lived experience (Yalom, 1980). With respect to patient management, it would not be easy to put existential mindfulness and compassion into a CBT formulation (Rowe, 1996). A different perspective is therefore needed for the consideration of coping strategies in the oppressive situation (Stevenson & Renard, 1993) as treatment emphasis should be on liberation rather than behaviour modification (Beauvoir, 1949).

### Humanistic/Existential Approach

The third and final major psychotherapeutic modality is shared by two approaches: Humanistic and Existential. With researchers underscoring many objections to deterministic models of psychic functioning (Rank, 1945; Sartre, 1948; Binswanger,

1956) in both Psychoanalytic as well Cognitive Behavioral Therapeutic approaches, both Humanistic and Existential methodologies also began to take shape. One of the foci was to apply phenomenological and existential philosophies in assisting the individual to achieve his or her fullest potential and an authentic existence (Yalom, 1980). Many similarities and disparities have been drawn between the two approaches in addition to independent analysts within each approach. However both philosophical forces assist in increasing consciousness and offer the patient supportive choices, as he or she is capable of developing individuality and determining his or her destiny (Jones-Smith, 2012).

Two major theorists associated with the emancipation of these alternatives to cognitive behavioral therapies and psychodynamic approaches are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Yalom, 1980). The Humanistic paradigm is often viewed as an overarching category encompassing subcategories including Gestalt therapy and Existential psychotherapy. With a patient-centered focus (Rogers, 1965) the Humanistic approach aims to recognize human capabilities in areas such as creativity and holistic personal growth (Maslow, 1968) by focusing on the creation of innate actualization (Farber, 2010). Even if the focus is on a single feature in the patient's life, such as oppression, the therapist places emphasis on it only as part of a whole (Barton, 2000).

The humanistic angle is optimistic in its assessment of the patient, and views people as fundamentally good with the potential need to work toward eliminating their bad thoughts and behaviours (Cain, 2002). "For, in a metaphysics of [liberty], evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophies it is impossible to account for it."

(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 34) Sadly, there are humans who absolutely want evil (Beauvoir, 1947).

Unlike Kant, we do not see man as being essentially a positive will. [...] He is first at a distance from himself. He can coincide with himself only by agreeing never to rejoin himself. There is within him a perpetual playing with the negative, and he thereby escapes himself, he escapes his freedom. And it is precisely because an evil will is here possible that the words “to will oneself free” have a meaning. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 33)

The issue is not whether people are good enough; rather it is a matter of developing the kind of social conditions that are most conducive to equality, individuality and freedom (May, 1973). However, not all persons live authentically and ethically; those who act out of bad faith are thus capable of causing harm to others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Disregarding harmful social determinants and risk factors disallows treatment to reach the crux of the issues in oppressive conditions (Beauvoir, 1949).

*Existentialism is a humanism* (Sartre, 1948).

The Existential psychotherapy branch of the Humanistic movement is focused more narrowly than humanistic psychotherapy on a person’s existence (Rice, 1992) with arguably the main theorists being Viktor Frankl, Rollo May and Irvin Yalom. From the beginning, Existential psychotherapy was introduced as an authentic endeavor to grasp reality (May, 1989) by addressing four important life themes: death, freedom, isolation

and meaning (Van Deurzen, 2010). When one has a confrontation with difficult issues such as death, one can wake up and move out of a false consciousness to a state of greater ontological awareness (Yalom, 1980). Since we do not succeed in fleeing difficult truths, Existential approaches encourage us to look them in the face (Beauvoir, 1947) to find healing. While it is generally understood that these four issues are central to the human experience (May, 1989), not all patients may be looking at delving into the aforementioned.

Logotherapy, founded by Viktor Frankl, is located within the Existential realm of psychotherapy. Much like other Existential schools, Logotherapy addresses freedom and meaning (Frankl, 1988) with the belief that an individual's most fundamental value is to understand the meaning of their existence. Aside from being seen as too philosophical for certain patient populations, Logotherapy has also been criticized for its similarities to religion, as the techniques lead people to discover their meaning, the higher purpose in their life. Critics have said that this humanistic therapeutic method is based on faith rather than on science (Bulka, 1978) and has somewhat of a strict focus (Eysenck, 1965).

Humanistic therapies tend to emphasize intrapsychic processes and interpersonal interactions in the context of the individual, without enough consideration of the socially constructed environment (Bugental, 1964). They do not make explicit egalitarian problems that continually plague our society and do not raise the patient's consciousness of these aspects of one's reality and ontology (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir's work often debates with other Humanistic/Existential theorists to demystify prevalent injustices in repressive situations with culturally and historically egalitarian principles. Other approaches avoid, in large part, the processes and effects of



the major issue needing attention, that of oppression (Berman, 2012), and therefore are not adequately suited for targets or victims of oppression.

A victim of oppression may fail to understand that such a psychological constraint is merely a conditional aspect of life. The condition does not define who the person is (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). For Beauvoir, psychotherapeutic approaches must therefore contrast the person's situated experience with his or her consciousness. In addition, therapy must assist with the decision-making process to exercise the choice of ontological freedom for the individual to will him or herself back to individual liberty (Beauvoir, 1949). Finally, in the context of oppression, therapeutic approaches which do not recognize and address the fundamental constituent of human existence, that of ambiguity, cannot claim to address and manage the root of the problem (Beauvoir, 1949).

Rather than using one system of analysis, [Beauvoir] combines phenomenology, existentialism, psychology, historical materialism, and liberal political concerns to come up with a unique and comprehensive view of [...one's] lived reality. She makes a traditional liberal call for rights and equality, develops a political phenomenology, and uses an existential psychology. For Beauvoir, everything must be taken into account. (Andrew, 2003)

Depression, as the result of repressive social structures which grant the oppressor the *right* to abuse and exclude, must be treated with an all-inclusive and interdisciplinary approach, and the core of the matter must be addressed (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

## Chapter 4

### Beauvoirian Therapy

#### Beauvoirian Approach

With her typical Beauvoirian style, that is with bold declarations, harsh statements and conflicting assertions, along with interesting word choices, Beauvoir manages to create an atmosphere in which we can understand the unrest in ambiguity. She deconstructs the hidden suffering and tension as well as the struggle in conditions of oppression. Beauvoir depicts how oppression *is*, so as to assist us in understanding how freedom *becomes*. The two prominent and reoccurring themes in Beauvoirian texts are the demystification of humans' objectification and reduction to Other, as well as the consequential necessity to attain subjectivity so as to achieve the ultimate freedom: moral freedom.

Central to Beauvoir's approach is the notion of not having a rigid predetermined list of criteria that define an individual as functional or dysfunctional. To understand depression caused by oppression, we must take an individual's psychological state as well as their socially imposed conditions into account (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). A main point presented is that the oppressed are socially constructed as Other and, as a result of this social construct, the Other is targeted with harassing, destructive and abusive words and acts as well as exclusion and isolation (Beauvoir, 1970). Beauvoir states that her goal

is to clarify the condition of the oppressed, for the eventual treatment of those suffering with consequent conditions, and in particular, depression.

While the need to address depression in the social context of oppression is recognized, for decades Beauvoir's ground breaking work on socially at-risk populations has been criticized for being anecdotal and irrelevant in the clinical setting. One of the main erroneous assumptions regarding Beauvoir's work on marginalized and oppressed groups is that it is etiological without providing supporting empirical evidence. Moreover, it may be easy, initially, to confuse her work as participating in abrasive depictions and negative stereotypes (Andrew, 2003). However, Beauvoir uses various strategies, including hostile tactics and a distinctive phenomenological approach, to describe the harmful experience of oppression.

### Beauvoirian Treatment

Based on my belief in individuality, equality and freedom from oppressive conditions, I will now present Beauvoirian Therapy. Beauvoirian Therapy is intended to advance consciousness of oppression, to facilitate courage along with empowerment in order to support decision-making for the improvement of targeted and/or victimized individuals' as well as societal outcomes by arriving at the conscious exercise of one's free will.

Beauvoirian Therapy brings together pertinent elements of Beauvoir's research and dissemination for the development of its applicability to psychotherapeutic service delivery. This original model has been designed to facilitate an understanding of oppressive conditions, as well as to accord "to the individual an absolute value and that it

recognizes in him alone the power of laying the foundations of his own existence.”  
(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156) While Beauvoirian Therapy may be useful as patients’  
psychotherapeutic treatment for those with severe psychopathologies and/or other  
cognitive issues, this approach would be part of a more comprehensive care delivery  
plan.

To propose this new paradigm, I interpret Beauvoir’s philosophy and theory by  
piecing together themes marked by recurrent references to the concept of oppression and  
its subsequent depressive outcomes. To further shape this model, I outline key  
Beauvoirian concepts and hypotheses, and harness their implications as they pertain to  
oppressive human conditions, resulting in a depression model and framework to aid  
targeted individuals.

Much like other similar theoretical and philosophical psychotherapies, for each  
stage of care, Beauvoirian Therapy provides a therapeutic question protocol as well as a  
step-care convergence of concepts. These concepts yield key themes supported by  
Beauvoirian quotations, as data<sup>23</sup>, to support and promote active and prompted discussion  
for treatment, in view of: 1) heightening the level of perception and awareness, 2)  
allowing for the expression of emotion, 3) aiding in an analysis of choices for potential  
decisions and 4) moving ahead with optimistic possibilities. The treatment prompts allow  
for an open-ended expression of the multitude of feelings that have been isolated and  
silenced. This will ideally help validate perceptions and liberate suppressed internalized  
feelings (Yalom, 1980). In all of the discussions there is also an explicit educational

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<sup>23</sup> All data will take the form of excerpts from Beauvoir’s texts in treatment tables.

component as the therapist and patient delve into each quotation and prompt. With the requisite philosophical background knowledge of Beauvoir's philosophy, the therapist assists with the exploration of the meanings of quotations from Beauvoir and how the varying inductive inferences relate to each of them. This will result in individualized and open possibilities for the patient to work toward transcending his or her social condition. As with other service delivery models, Beauvoirian Therapy requires a considerable amount of understanding of both psychological treatment as well as Beauvoir's philosophical and theoretical frameworks, as this module is intended to be used as a supplemental piece for practicing or for teaching professionals.

Therapy begins with the referral of a patient who presents DSM criteria for reactive, unipolar, nonpsychotic depression stemming from subjugation and/or one who self-identifies as depressed due to having experienced oppression and thus, seeks care.<sup>24</sup> Beauvoirian Therapy can be used as a complete care plan or simply as a *point of departure* (Beauvoir, 1944) as therapists are free to add, delete and/or modify sections to better synergize with their overarching foci. In addition, Beauvoirian Therapy is a *collective project* (Beauvoir, 1964). As such, patients contribute equally to its efficacy.

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<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that Beauvoirian Therapy does not manage or treat depression associated with cognitive dysfunction or any psychopathologies, unless used as a complementary treatment.

## Treatment Delivery

The following Beauvoirian Therapy techniques have been developed with Beauvoir's fundamental themes and are proposed specifically for use in the context of oppression. They are presented in an academically accessible format and can be applied in individual or group settings in addition to community or work environments. This will provide a systematic and humane process for unearthing unhealthy *false harmonies* and *asymmetrical conditions* (Beauvoir, 1949).

Each phase of treatment begins with the therapist exploring the key concepts outlined in the *Education as a form of intervention* edifying notes. Next, the therapist engages the patient by encouraging the *Patient's voice* through inductively derived questions. Once the question segment is complete, the therapist proceeds to *Beauvoirian principles* and explains the key concepts as outlined in the treatment plan. The therapist then moves on to *Prompted Discussion* for an explorative and interactive segment. Each phase ends with a *Home exercise* to be reviewed and discussed whenever appropriate.

## Opening notes to the patient

It is of vital importance at the early stage of this therapy to mention the main aspects and *intentions* within the Beauvoirian Therapy framework:

- In Beauvoirian Therapy there is supportive inquiry into the patient's oppressive conditions. The methods used in the prompted treatment sections are based on the same overarching empathetic and patient-centered techniques that underpin humanistic and existential sessions.

- Beauvoirian Therapy states clearly that oppression is a human rights violation and will treat bullying, undermining, mobbing, scapegoating and psychological subjugation as forms of abuse, which need to be addressed as such.
- Beauvoirian Therapy treats oppression not only on a personal level, but also on societal and political levels. Hence, patients should know at an early stage of their therapeutic intervention that one of the delineating components of Beauvoirian Therapy is its focus on social education and political justice in addition to its focus on personal healing from an emotional perspective.
- Another defining technique in Beauvoirian Therapy is the importance it places on dissemination, that is, chronicling of the lived experience of oppression. Patients will be asked to write their experiences in varying formats during certain stages. This process is similar to journaling techniques found in other therapies (Pennebaker, 2004).
- Finally, another unique aspect of Beauvoirian Therapy is a group advocacy component with like-minded individuals which enables those who choose to move forward with policy recommendations, for more effective health and safety guidelines.

### Key features of Beauvoirian Therapy

- Treatment is *explorative, interactive* and *ambiguous*<sup>25</sup>.
- Care delivery is individual-centered and therapeutic dialogue is open-ended.
- Treatment implications and discussion inferences are drawn from Beauvoirian ethics and themes.
- Understanding resolutions will be within the context of oppression.

### There are the six inductively developed phases in Beauvoirian Therapy

- 1) Conscious Awareness
- 2) Oppression
- 3) Lived Experience
- 4) Revolt
- 5) Healing Depression and Anxiety
- 6) Intentionality

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<sup>25</sup> We create meaning and movement in our existence (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).



## Treatment coordination

For each of these six phases, the therapist begins with an overview of the general focus of the particular section. The therapist can either read the short introductory segment to the patient or use it as a focus prompt.

Therapy sessions for each of the six phases continue with the following segments:

**First**, is the *Education as a Form of Intervention* segment.

- Provided is a list of edifying notes that the therapist reads and follows with a brief explanation of how the point relates to overarching Beauvoirian ethics.

**The second segment** of treatment is *The Patient's Voice*.

- The therapist asks the inductively derived questions, which explore key issues from various angles, to prompt the patient to convey his or her thoughts and feelings.

**The third segment** of treatment is *Beauvoirian Principles*.

- The therapist examines key issues relating to oppression via Beauvoirian framework to offer a better understanding of the patient's condition.

**The fourth segment** of treatment is a *Prompted Discussion*.

- The therapist begins an open-ended prompted discussion with explorative quotations and inductive inferences, which in turn connect the quotations to diverse Beauvoirian tactics. The patient explores the varying ways in which both the quotation, as well as the inference, relate to, or enlighten, the patient's oppressive experience.

**The fifth and final segment** for each phase of treatment is a *Home Exercise*.

- To continue treatment in the community setting, the patient takes home an exercise that will further assist in his or her transcendence.

## Chapter 5

### Conscious Awareness

During the first phase of Beauvoirian Therapy, we focus on conscious awareness and social cognition. We assist the patient in developing skills to inquire into situations and arrive at a clear understanding of negatively-impacting societal conditions, with an intention-linked perception (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). There must be a shift in consciousness for those who have been oppressed to heal.

Table 1

#### *Education as a Form of Intervention*

<p>Edifying Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For Beauvoir, conscious awareness does not predict or guarantee freedom from oppression, but it is on the path to liberty (Beauvoir, 1963).</li><li>• The best thing to do in life is to act according to your authentic conscience (Beauvoir, 1946; 1947; 1949; 1970).</li><li>• It is important to always have the opportunity to awaken from your intellectual lethargy and claim a heightened awareness (Beauvoir, 1949).</li><li>• Conscious awareness is an actual activity that can guide us to action and positivity (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).</li><li>• Consciousness opens itself to possibilities (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970)</li></ul>
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- We are truly free, when we develop conscious awareness of our freedom (Beauvoir, 1947).
- Human freedom has its limits (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 2

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
What do you think conscious awareness has the ability to bring you?
Can you explain what <i>freedom versus destiny</i> means to you?
How do you think that we can bridge gaps in understanding what you have endured?
In which way can conscious awareness help guide your human experiences?
How do you cast yourself into the world?
Do you feel a sense of urgency in addressing your condition?
How can someone who is in a weak and vulnerable state discover their personal strength?
Do you believe that in situations that cause people to lose themselves is where they can find themselves? If so, please explain.
Is there something more that you would like to express before further exploring Beauvoirian principles?

### *Beauvoirian Principles*

Beauvoir is very clear when she exposes mystification as a universal human rights violation, which needs to be dealt with as such (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947; 1949; 1970). By cultivating personal and collective conscious awareness that aims at awakening and heightening perception, an understanding of the ambiguities of life emerges, which will ultimately lead to better conditions (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). It is critical thinking that sets up a humanly superior, universal and timeless ethical value that transcends cultures and leads to objective truth (Beauvoir, 1947).

Beauvoir believes in the uniquely human capacity for reflective consciousness, which can be the defining moment leading to anti-determinism, autonomy and intentional freedom (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Our consciousness is a vital component of existence, because it allows the understanding that what we face typically has several and opposing meanings. Objectivity can become subjectivity (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947).

We think that the meaning of the situation does not impose itself on the consciousness of a passive subject, that it surges up only by the disclosure which a free subject effects in his project. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 20)

In Beauvoirian Therapy, the main aim in treatment is to help the patient become aware of their oppression and to promote their desire to choose better personal and societal outcomes (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). For Beauvoir, consciousness surpasses itself and is aware of something more than the present situation (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947).

## Intentionally-based Conscious Awareness

One of the factors that differentiates Beauvoirian Therapy from other approaches is the notion that consciousness is always linked to intentionality; being aware is typically in support of an intention. It is the intentionality in our conscious thoughts that identifies us, individualizes us, and balances our understanding of our limits with our will to heal (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947). It divides good from evil, as either are realized through individual thought processes (Beauvoir, 1947). Consciousness gives us the ability to represent our goals. This subjective state of perception implies the understanding of the intersubjective relationships with others and with one's environment (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). It also allows us to make sense of events and move past imposed boundaries, both personally and socially. Consequently, our conscience is the motivating factor that shapes our outcomes (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

## Perception within Oppression

One must develop awareness of one's oppression to facilitate intentionality, empowerment and courage to improve outcomes by transcending diseased conditions. When therapists facilitate conscious awareness, their patients are supported in articulating their feelings and, collectively, the patient, with the therapist's assistance, can achieve a clear direction of how they intend to heal and move forward. For Beauvoir, conscious awareness is invaluable (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) as it allows patients to become aware of their intentions and to work toward therapeutic change, based on their own experiences and authentic principles (Beauvoir, 1947). Patients must however first realize that they are free within the constraints of their situation (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

A patient's healing starts with the demystification of violations and abuses, and allows the facts to be their source of courage and power (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). When individual perceptual experience is recognized, human consciousness, while bearing within it the acceptance of risk and fear, can start taking possibilities into account (Beauvoir, 1947). We must expand traditional analyses of depression in oppressive situations in order to provide a basis for further inquiry into the complexities of human consciousness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir claims that oppressed individuals have a stronger capacity to feel damaging social conditions than those who assert their "own existence without taking into account that of others" (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 61) as they are narcissistic and arrogant (Beauvoir, 1947). These superficial individuals do not understand the insights of introspection because, under the *veil of illusion*, they claim an inauthentic and, most often, temporary sense of power (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949).

Inadvertently, oppressed individuals or groups have developed an acute and heightened perception of their situation (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Individuals acquire consciousness under circumstances depending on the society in which they are members. Thus, their awareness is the representation of their trauma, which, through the gift of experiencing human reactive emotions, such as depression, they will be in a better position to understand the social abuses they have suffered and to take conscious action (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Acquiring conscious awareness is the starting point to attain freedom. Beauvoirian Therapy will help patients uncover their oppressive conditions, and help them become aware of the damage caused (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Table 3

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
Self-knowledge is no guarantee of happiness, but it is on the side of happiness and can supply the courage to fight for it (Beauvoir, 1963).	Your conscious awareness of your condition will help you move forward, empowered and with hope.
[L]et man put his will to be “in parentheses” and he will thereby be brought to the consciousness of his true condition (Beauvoir, 1947).	We can convert your oppressive situation into what your true condition should be.
It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting (Beauvoir, 1947).	You will receive strength to heal from the trauma you endured on various levels, based on your will.
There is only one good. And that is to act according to the dictates of one's conscience (Beauvoir, 1946).	Based on your principles, your conscious awareness will guide our therapy sessions.
To attain his truth, man must not attempt to dispel the ambiguity of his being but, on the contrary, accept the task of realizing it (Beauvoir, 1947).	Becoming aware of the facts about your condition will allow you to accept what you will face in moving forward.
Human consciousness itself is nothing	Your consciousness can lead you to

<p>more than the kind of thing that can take into account alternative possibilities (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>optimistic healing in many respects.</p>
<p>Events in an autobiography, on the other hand, “retain all the gratuitousness, the unpredictability, and the often preposterous complications that marked their original occurrence” (Beauvoir, 1963).</p>	<p>Your story is your truth.</p>

Table 4

*Home Exercise*

<p>Bibliotherapy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start a journal and write your own narrative about your experiences with as much detail as you can remember. At this stage, simply allow for a free-flow of thoughts and feelings. Turn your experiences into your story.</li> </ul> <p>Progressive Purpose: Keep journaling, as the more you move toward your story, the more you become aware of your oppression. And the more aware you are of your oppression, the more you will want to improve your outcome.</p>
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## Chapter 6

### Oppression

During the second phase of Beauvoirian Therapy, we focus on oppression. Understanding that the issues lay within the oppressors as well as society, not with those targeted or victimized is of vital importance to healing and to surpassing the given condition (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 5

#### *Education as a Form of Intervention*

##### Edifying Notes

- Beauvoir recognizes the cruelty of oppression inflicted on vulnerable populations or individuals such as those who may be targets of jealousy (Beauvoir, 1981), nonconformists (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970), advocates of specific causes and supporters of social justice. Other persons who may be targeted are those who, for one reason or another, pose a threat to the bully's power or who are perceived to be exposing the oppressors themselves (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949).
- No oppression is justified or natural (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).
- The oppressed become scapegoats and are unfairly blamed for negative events which may arise (Beauvoir, 1949).

- We are all interconnected, which is why oppression is possible (Beauvoir, 1947).
- This type of abuse is criminal and a universal human rights violation (Beauvoir, 1947).
- It is necessary to understand what is hidden, silenced and taboo (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 6

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
Do you feel that you are being blocked from positive development?
In which ways do you feel that oppression is wrong?
Have you considered that oppression is a universal human rights violation?
Do you realize that oppression goes against your natural human condition?
Describe ways in which abusive oppression is harming you.
Would you like to speak more on this topic before moving on to Beauvoirian principles?

## *Beauvoirian Principles*

### Oppression

Oppression is a violent and corrupt abuse of power. This type of abuse creates an unhealthy asymmetry where the oppressor restricts an individual's free will and forces him or her into a position of subordination (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Oppression cuts the victims' transcendence from their goals, condemning the oppressed into immanence. Oppression comprises the deliberate reduction of an individual into a mere *object*, which is imposed upon those abused by the oppressors (Beauvoir, 1947). Nobody can deny that there are natural differences between people, however, harmful interpretations and social stratification that the oppressors draw from these differences are unjustifiable. Conditions that create, allow for, perpetuate and mask oppression further force Others into immanence as, typically, one does not dispute established hierarchies (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Oppression can be a public or private form of abuse that manipulates, corrupts, reduces, isolates, excludes and devastates (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). With the desire for, and abuse of, corrupt power, oppression aims at dominating and debilitating one's individuality, equality and transcendent freedom rather than allowing expressions of courage, empowerment, and sovereignty (Beauvoir, 1947).

Life is occupied in both perpetuating itself and surpassing itself; if all it does is maintain itself, then living is only not dying, [...] a life justifies itself only if its effort to perpetuate itself is integrated into its surpassing and if this surpassing has no other limits than those which the subject assigns himself.

Oppression divides the world into two clans: those who enlighten mankind by thrusting it ahead of itself and those who are condemned to mark time hopelessly in order merely to support the collectivity; their life is a pure repetition of mechanical gestures; their leisure is just about sufficient for them to regain their strength; the oppressor feeds himself on their transcendence and refuses to extend it by a free recognition. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82)

Oppression is a destructive, relentless, unjustified, evil tyranny that can be directed at an individual or group, in the home, within an institution or in a community (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The evil originates in a situation against which all individual or collective action seems powerless (Beauvoir, 1949). It stems from inauthentic negative forces that manifest themselves as forms of abuse, which are carried out in bad faith, imposed on those *incapable* of asserting their innate strength to reclaim their own liberty (Beauvoir, 1947).

### Oppression as a Social Condition

Social construction is one of the most significant hypotheses capable of explaining why people experience oppression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The Beauvoirian approach to oppression is one which recognizes human dichotomies; people are independent but at the same time bound to each other. Because humans are free, yet interconnected, unprincipled individuals can in actual fact create concrete social conditions where others' freedom is hindered. People become objectified, and may not be

aware that they can reject these inhumane and unnatural conditions and claim back their subjectivity (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The social construct of oppression is based on difference and inequality principles<sup>26</sup> (Beauvoir, 1947). While acknowledging the reality of differences, Beauvoir prompts one to think of the social representations of certain socially at-risk populations. Culture builds on diversity and socially constructs *identities* (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). There is no biological or essential basis for socially constructed categorization. Nor is there a basis for the oppressive and damaging effects of such deterministic categorization (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). The negative interpretation of disparities forces socially at-risk populations or individually targeted persons to constantly struggle to create meaning in their forced role (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Different roles, created by society, place various demands upon individuals. Character-linked functions become *requirements* (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Beauvoir suggests that society thrusts people into specific conditions which are most often inequitable and paralyzing to those relegated to the subordinate positions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Humans are understood only in their totality (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). People's individuality and actions are constantly subjected to scrutiny. Beauvoir celebrates individuals' disparities and intricacies and vehemently denounces any

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<sup>26</sup> No difference should be discriminatory or offer disproportionate advantages. If there is a value represented in individuality and differences, it is a socially-constructed value that varies from culture to culture and over time.

*resulting* social stratification that can lead to an erosion of individual identity and self-esteem (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

It is, in point of fact, a difficult matter for man to realize the extreme importance of social discriminations which seem outwardly insignificant but which produce in [the oppressed] moral and intellectual effects so profound that they appear to spring from her original nature. (Beauvoir, 1949, p. xxxii)

Beauvoir underscores the importance of understanding the unnatural relationship between the oppressor and the Other, as this rapport is what dehumanizes and strips the Others' human rights and thrusts them into immanence. The ever-present subject/object principle is what oppressors use to justify *criminal* abuse of individuals and groups (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). With respect to oppression:

[...] society is not only guilty but downright criminal. Sheltering behind the myths of expansion and affluence, it treats the [oppressed] as outcasts. (Beauvoir, 1970, p. 2)

This type of treatment must come to an end. It is clear that several issues need to be addressed as we can no longer be satisfied with mere *policy change* (Beauvoir, 1949). As a concerned collective society, we need policy adherence and a *radical shift* in attitude (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Although it may be much easier to ignore inauthentic freedom that gets away with sabotaging the freedom of others, or that “count[s] it for very

little” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 154), it may even be terrifying to address the witnessed abuse, but something must be done (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Speaking out becomes dangerous because outspoken observers, whistle blowers and advocates become the next targets. In addition, victims who challenge their oppressors experience an unimaginable increase of abuse. Denouncing injustices puts people at risk. Hence, bullying prevails; oppression continues to be masked and hidden (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). How do we explain the silencing of such contentious issues (Beauvoir, 1949)? Will there be a way to escape such abusive conditions? This confrontation allows for reflection on an *essential question* (Beauvoir, 1970) and potentially “[aims] to re-establish the [oppressed] individual within his rights.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 107)

### Oppression as the Rejection of Freedom

Moral freedom is deciding on *choice*, undetermined and unrestricted choice (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947). To be free is to support basic freedom, which is the freedom of choice. These choices, however, must not be in favour of denying another individual’s choice, because then, one becomes a slave to removing the victim’s liberties. Freedom to oppress and to bully should be denied (Beauvoir, 1947). Freedom must be exerted with no discriminatory, asymmetrical or damaging effects. Freedom must respect intersubjectivity and equality as principles (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Freedom is ambiguous in the sense that meaning is never fixed, and its movement is toward an open future. However there has been, and continues to be, much societal corruption that impedes the principle of balanced and equitable freedom, thus causing systems of

oppression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Any of the aforementioned breaches are violations of another's natural human condition (Beauvoir, 1947).

Oppression is much more critical than merely interpersonal issues. It is a social and political condition and must be addressed as such (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The goal of Beauvoirian Therapy is for every human life to be lived in *transparent* freedom (Beauvoir, 1946), because free will is the source from which equality, individuality, meaningfulness and authentic existence are born (Beauvoir, 1947). The concept of oppression must be understood as inversely related to justice and freedom (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 7

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
Do you feel the oppressor is truly free, considering they are striving for, and are holding on to unethical control over another? Please explain your thoughts on this.
How do you feel about the oppressor resisting the fact that you are claiming your human rights?
What do you think about the oppressor's outward psychological warfare? Do you feel it allows for inward reflection and introspection?
Do you believe that the oppressor wants the situation to be resolved?
Why do you think the oppressor is blocking your freedom?
How would you describe the oppressor's self-perception?



How do you think the oppressor understands how others view him or her?
How have you noticed the oppressor seeking accolades?
Do you think the oppressor feels <i>threatened</i> by your presence?
Do you think oppressors realize that we are all interconnected and that our liberty is interconnected? If so, please explain.
Do you have any other thoughts before turning to Beauvoirian principles?

### *Beauvoirian Principles*

#### Oppressors

Beauvoir meticulously deconstructs the social condition of individuals and devastating effects that result from oppression. The reason why oppressors succeed in mystifying, concealing and camouflaging such abusive situations is that they present lies and conceal the facts (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They do so in such a way that oppression does not seem to be imposed on the victims but rather, it appears to be a natural given which one would not dispute (Beauvoir, 1947).

Oppressors are bullies (Beauvoir, 1949). They attribute parts of themselves to others in their schemes, and displace their unacceptable deeds onto ~~the~~ others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They manipulate people to create conditions where they can exert their *false* freedom and inauthentic power to diminish another (Beauvoir, 1947).

Oppressors are cowards who find their self-worth by devaluing others, rather than improving themselves. They hide their jealousy while suffocating the Other (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949).

Oppressors are narcissistic abusers who live in bad faith (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). They steal credit for Others' work and achievements because they are *impotent*, and they disguise this weakness behind falsities and arrogance. They want to look the best, be the most liked, the most intelligent and the most powerful (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

[The oppressor] is concerned with the effort to appear [...] important, superior; he pretends so as to get pretence in return; he, too, is aggressive, uneasy; he feels hostility for [the targets] because he is afraid of them, he is afraid of them because he is afraid of the personage, the image, with which he identifies himself. He would be liberated himself in their liberation. But this is precisely what he dreads.

(Beauvoir, 1949, p. 719-720)

In order to prevent the liberation of Others, oppressors hide their abuse by labeling their targets and by accusing them of falsehoods. They attempt to segregate their targets from their community circles, from their work environments, from family functions and whatever they claim as *their territory*. They set their allies against their targets. They make both their targets as well as their allies distrust one another in order to have them dissociate even more from one another. They continue to lie, manipulate and present the constructed oppressive conditions as natural since after all, one can not question nature (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Oppressors are selfish and they align themselves with whoever will aid in fulfilling their purpose (Beauvoir, 1947). Oppressors “will range [themselves] on the side

of the regimes which guarantee [their] his privileges, and [they] will prefer those which confirm [them in their] contempt.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 62) They use accomplices to impose intense tyranny (Beauvoir, 1947).

By denying the Other’s freedom, oppressors are not free themselves (Beauvoir, 1947). With such a state of preoccupation (Beauvoir, 1947) with respect to Other’s lives, oppressors fall into immanence and create a condition of failure due to the constant quest for domination (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Oppressors do not understand liberty since what they know “is the supreme servitude of tyranny.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 62) Freedom is not achieved by being ‘enslaved’ by negativity and the quest to violate and destroy. To be free requires responsible decision-making and concern for others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). In their pursuit of glory, tyrants fail to reach an authentic existence (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They “play upon the notion of freedom in a dishonest way” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 16), and because of their ruthlessness

nothing prevents [them] from sacrificing [...] insignificant beings to [their] own will for power. [They] will treat them like instruments; [they] will destroy them if they get in [their] way. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 61)

The abusers “try to mask the crime [i]f they can not totally deny it, they attempt to justify it.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 109) They manipulate, and under the guise of altruism, they claim that they are exercising responsibility and accountability in their disparagement of Others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). To further deceive, oppressors fault their targets and declare *disappointment* in the targets *not being* who the oppressors *wanted* them to be (Beauvoir, 1947).

Opressors are *ignorant* since they are not aware of two important factors: 1) victims may become aware of how they are being undermined, mobbed, psychologically abused and violated, and 2) victims become aware of their human rights. The implications of these two important features in the cycle of oppression may have unwanted consequences for the oppressor (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 8

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
Differences are not enough to define a hierarchy (Beauvoir, 1949).	Being different, thinking differently, acting differently... none of these are grounds for oppression.
But he is dishonest; in the name of the serious or of his passions, of his will for power or of his appetites, he refuses to give up his privileges (Beauvoir, 1947).	Behind the facade of serious objectives, bullies want power and privileges over others.
Any dictatorship is a fault (Beauvoir, 1947).	The misuse of power is not a positive force.
Evil originates [...] in a situation against which all individual action is powerless (Beauvoir, 1949).	The oppressed are <i>stuck</i> .
[T]he fact is that there are men who	The fact is that there are people who feel

can justify their life (sic) only by a negative action. [...] (Beauvoir, 1947).	they need to put others down to elevate themselves.
The truth is that the vicious circle is so hard to break (Beauvoir, 1949).	Oppressors do not want to concede power.
If you live long enough, you'll see that every victory turns into a defeat. (Beauvoir, 1946).	Life is constant movement. False <i>power</i> dissolves. The oppressor cannot sustain false harmony and other vicious ruses forever.
[The oppressor is not seen as] being essentially a positive will. On the contrary, he is first defined as a negativity (Beauvoir, 1947).	Oppressors are unethical and exert evil.
What time and strength [the oppressor] squanders in liquidating, sublimating, transferring complexes, in talking about the [target] (Beauvoir, 1949).	Oppressors spend an exorbitant amount of time 'oppressing'; there is constant falsifying and imposition of values to continue fulfilling the oppressor's agenda.
If the [target's] issue is so absurd, it is because the [oppressor...] made it a discussion (Beauvoir, 1949).	The oppressor spreads deceitful and untruthful gossip to serve his quest for power and false justification. Why do oppressors keep 'picking on' everything about you?
That is what makes criticism so easy	Oppressors criticize everything about their

[...] (Beauvoir, 1947).	targets.
[The oppressor] denies any meaning to his transcendence, and yet he transcends himself (Beauvoir, 1947).	By feeding themselves on their targets' transcendence, oppressors' actions are void of purpose and meaning, yet they continue to <i>become</i> elevated socially or promoted in the workforce.
In spite of everything his success in this depends upon the capricious freedom of women: he must constantly try to keep this propitious to him (Beauvoir, 1949).	Oppressors lay claim to others' endeavors and take credit for others' efforts.
[The oppressor] obstinately persists in the mystifications intended to keep [oppressed persons in] chains (Beauvoir, 1949).	Oppressors are relentless with their lies in order to keep up the abuse of others.
All the same, there's a rumor going around [...] (Beauvoir, 1960).	Oppressors falsely create and painful and harmful stories, but you ought to move forward.
[T]he matter becomes really agonizing when it is a question of a Cause which genuinely serves man (Beauvoir, 1947).	What is difficult to endure is when oppressors claim they are doing what is <i>right</i> .
Only man can be an enemy for man;	

<p>only he can rob him of the meaning of his acts and his life because it also belongs only to him alone to confirm it in its existence (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>In the end, oppressors face the consequences of their actions.</p>
<p>All oppression creates a state of war (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>Oppressors create enemies.</p>
<p>[T]he ill-will of the oppressor imposes upon each one the alternative of being the enemy of the oppressed if he is not that of their tyrant (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Oppressors gather their <i>allies</i> to collectively bully the target. This is what defines a mobbing situation.</p>
<p>At once the oppressor raises an objection: under the pretext of freedom, he says, there you go oppressing me in turn; you deprive me of <i>my</i> freedom (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Oppressors turn everything around onto their victims and continue their fabrications.</p>
<p>But the oppressor would not be so strong if he did not have accomplices (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Allies need to understand the role they play in the abuse.</p>
<p>He throws himself into his undertakings with zest, into exploration, conquest, war [...] but he does not attach himself to the end at which he aims; only to his conquest.</p>	<p>Oppressors want war but do not think of the ramifications they will ultimately face.</p>

<p>He likes action for its own sake (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	
<p>[The oppressor] remains indifferent to the content, that is, to the human meaning of his action, who thinks he can assert his own existence without taking into account that of others (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Opressors feel no guilt for committing abusive crimes.</p>
<p>But what he then knows is the supreme servitude of tyranny (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>The oppressor reduces him or her self to being a bigot, a bully, and a psychological tormentor.</p>
<p>The tyrant asserts himself as a transcendence; he considers others as pure immanences: he thus arrogates to himself the right to treat them like cattle (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Who do they think they are?</p>
<p>He regards mankind as indifferent matter destined to support the game of his existence (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Opressors are arrogant and narcissistic.</p>
<p>[The oppressor] finds more and more varied ways in which to employ the forces he is master of (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>Opressors are relentless.</p>



<p>He asserts himself as a pure internality against which no external power can take hold [...] (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Oppressors feel invincible.</p>
<p>[T]he oppressor [is] oppressed in turn; and the men who do violence to him in their turn become masters, tyrants, and executioners: in revolting, the oppressed are metamorphosed (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>What goes around comes around.</p>

### Targets

Targets are Other (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). “The Other is multiple, and on the basis of this new questions arise.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p.144) Who is Other? Beauvoir maintains anyone can be bullied at any given time (Beauvoir, 1947). Nevertheless, there is a higher prevalence of this insidious subjugation toward certain groups or members of particular groups (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). These groups consist of, but are not limited to, the minority groups at variance with: race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ability, body image, economic class, political affiliation, education and immigration status (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). What is more detrimental are the compounded effects of any two of these as the *double-marginalization* further solidifies the designated role of Other (Beauvoir, 1970).

Furthermore, targets of oppression are people who threaten, knowingly or unknowingly, the hierarchy that oppressors work so diligently to maintain (Beauvoir, 1949). These individuals are often the opposite of those whom one would *expect* to be subjected to such suppression (Beauvoir, 1947) as they are popular, enthusiastic, exceptional friends, successful professionals, extroverts, innocuous society members, and even human rights activists.

One of the aims of oppression is to reduce someone who has coveted elevated qualities in order to raise oneself. Therefore, people are brought down after having reached their highest point (Beauvoir, 1970). In addition, targets may simply be those who deviate from imposed socially constructed roles and so become *subjects of speculation* (Beauvoir, 1949). These individuals pose a colossal threat to an arrogant, narcissistic abuser whose chief expectation is conformity to his or her quest of imposed hierarchical domination (Beauvoir, 1949). In the eyes of those whose purpose is to dominate, they appear as obstacles (Beauvoir, 1947). The oppressed is the different one, forced into immanence, an object in the eyes of the artificially-claimed subjectivity (Beauvoir, 1949).

Of course, the higher rates of oppression against any of these individuals or groups does not imply that they are more subjected to oppression simply because they belong to one of these categories. That is to say, in no way is their elevated risk for oppression these persons' fault because there is no biological determinism, or natural diversity *rankism* (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). It is such an utterly unique experience, which makes it hard to convince oneself that such directed and fixated branding violations can happen to anybody (Beauvoir, 1960).

Table 9

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
If my censors are trying to say that I am different from them, then I take it as a compliment (Beauvoir, 1963).	You are not like your abusers.
The naive victim (Beauvoir, 1947).	Unsuspectingly, you find yourself being victimized. It is a startling realization.
No subject will readily volunteer to become the object (Beauvoir, 1949).	This is not a chosen situation.

Table 10

*Home Exercise*

<p data-bbox="250 1228 548 1262"><b>Identifying Oppression</b></p> <p data-bbox="250 1318 1308 1497">From the list below, contemplate and identify the characteristics of oppression that you have experienced and/or witnessed. In the blank areas of the chart, add other characteristics that you identify as oppressive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="302 1539 440 1572"><input type="checkbox"/> Rankism</li> <li data-bbox="302 1612 472 1646"><input type="checkbox"/> Vilification</li> <li data-bbox="302 1686 456 1719"><input type="checkbox"/> Exclusion</li> <li data-bbox="302 1759 477 1793"><input type="checkbox"/> Defamation</li> <li data-bbox="302 1833 423 1866"><input type="checkbox"/> Slander</li> </ul>
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- Corruption
- Control
- Isolation
- Rumor
- Accusation
- Scapegoating
- Mystification
- Innuendo
- Intimidation
- Humiliation
- Disparagement
- Ridicule
- Denigration
- Insulting
- Sabotage
- Snubbing
- Harassment
- Manipulation
- Discrimination
- Labeling
- Degradation
- Censuring
- Stereotyping

- Tormenting
- Persecution
- Undermining
- Censuring
- Malevolence
- Exploitation
- Destruction
- Condescension
- Misrepresentation
- Harassment
- Domination
- Depravation
- Imbalance
- Misinterpretation
- Projection
- Traumatization
- Influence peddling
- Truth distortion
- Negative action
- Power misuse
- Fault finding

## Chapter 7

### Lived Experience

During the third phase of Beauvoirian Therapy, with support and compassion, we focus mainly on the patient's voice (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970) to facilitate him or her in telling his or her lived experience. From the Beauvoirian perspective, depression is an existential, psychological and social event. Providing morale and encouragement for patients at a fundamental crossroad in their lives is a very important task.

Table 11

#### *Education as a Form of Intervention*

<p>Edifying Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beauvoir considers a retrospective review of your lived experiences a painful but a necessary process in moving toward healing and freedom from oppression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).</li><li>• For Beauvoir, methodically deconstructing past occurrences allows you to feel the internalized emotions that assist in bringing you to conscious awareness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).</li><li>• When someone imposes on your personal rights and freedoms, you have the right to tell your story (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).</li><li>• What is revealed in experiences of oppression is the absurd objectification</li></ul>
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of a human being, which remains forever unjustified until conscious awareness takes over (Beauvoir, 1947).

- To disclose your trauma and to *will* freedom are the same choice (Beauvoir, 1947).

Note:

Although for other phases the therapist takes clinical notes for the patient file, for this phase, all details of the answers must be itemized. These details may be part of potential future action.

Table 12

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
Detail your lived experience of oppression.
Please explain all that others have brought to your attention with respect to the behind-the-scenes undermining and mobbing.
Have you been labeled? If so please explain.
Detail the private, personal and professional sabotage that you may have endured.
Does the oppressor's slander and defamation of character make you feel criminally violated? If so please explain.
Does it seem like scenarios are being falsely created so that you do not know who to trust and feel oppressed even further? If so, please give a detailed explanation

including your feelings regarding being mobbed in this manner.
Has the oppressor tried to convince others that you are not the person you present yourself to be? If so please explain.
Does the oppressor try to discredit your moral ethics, vitality, generosity and intellect? If so, please explain.
Do you feel that everything that you do or say is 'misinterpreted', scrutinized and twisted? If so please explain.
How has the oppressor attacked you, your private life, community life and/or work life?
How has the oppressor tried to infiltrate various aspects of your life to probe for information to spin negatively?
How has the oppressor criticized what he or she believes to be your essence?
Has the oppressor tried to isolate you and exclude you from work meetings or community gatherings? If so, explain how.
Has the oppressor tried to silence you? If so, name the methods.
How has the oppressor tried to have you believe that you cannot trust anyone?
Has the oppressor set others as rivals against you? If so, who and how?
Has the oppressor claimed that it is he or she that is being oppressed when challenged? If so, explain the scenario.
Has the oppressor blamed you for all encountered problems? If so, please explain.
Have you noticed pre-planned conversations/actions being delivered as 'unplanned'?
How has the oppressor tried to villainize you?



Have you experienced relentless fault-finding and accusations?
Do you feel that speaking out against the abusers and the abuse puts you further at risk?
Do you feel that defending yourself and/or someone else is dangerous? If so, please explain why.
Do you feel robbed of your enthusiasm? If so, please explain.
Is there more that you would like me to know about your situation, before delving further into Beauvoirian principles?

### *Beauvoirian Principles*

Beauvoir dedicated much of her research to the science of lived experience with respect to oppressed individuals and groups (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Oppression leads to existential and emotional distress, pain and suffering (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970), as life is a reality and individuals internalize the truth of their journey (Beauvoir, 1972). A lived undeniable existence does not lie (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). We exist, and through our existence we experience (Beauvoir, 1947). We are what we are, but our experiences will ultimately shape who we will become (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Throughout time, many humans have felt an interpersonal tension and most of them have tried to mask it. It is now time to unveil it (Beauvoir, 1947). According to Beauvoir, individuals should believe and tell themselves:

I must be allowed to appeal. I will therefore struggle  
against those who want to stifle my voice, prevent me from

expressing myself, and prevent me from being. (Beauvoir, 1944, p. 136)

Beauvoirian Therapy guides in reflecting on the inauthentic, conformist and inequitable trauma of oppression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). It is in the accrued knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to survive and our reason for thinking and acting (Beauvoir, 1947). Hence, healing from oppressive mistreatment can only begin to occur through consenting to a comprehensive demystification of what is given to us through our traumatic experiences (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

There is an original type of attachment to our experiences, which does not want to endure evil, but rather to disclose having been victimized by such bad faith. Here we do not speak of failure. Rather, we emphasize the success of seeking transcendence and healing (Beauvoir, 1947). Patients of Beauvoirian Therapy can take the lead in phase three of the therapy by deconstructing oppressive occurrences and must be permitted to express any or all previously absorbed and restricted thoughts and emotions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Should the patient need any inferences, the scenario below details much of what has been reported in Beauvoirian literature, and may be used to assist in articulation.

## Background

Being bullied, undermined, mobbed and psychologically subjugated is more than just a list of occurrences (Beauvoir, 1947), since individuals absorb and embody phenomena by existing in the world (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Targets of oppression

are quite often unable to identify, much less create, a narrative of their oppression when thrust into such a situation. The synthesis of various manifestations of the abuse typically manifests once completely immersed (Beauvoir, 1947) and after repeated violations (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). In fact, the earliest responses are ones of denial and utter confusion (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949), as the oppressed are unaware that they were most likely branded and targeted before coming face-to-face with such evil tyranny (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949).

People are not born to be oppressed, they become oppressed (Beauvoir, 1949). People are born ontologically free (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Examining the targets' experiences is what contributes most to understanding the abuse they endured and its consequential concerns (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Oppression goes against the naturally free human condition. The vicious occurrences are non-inferential facts that are addressed as symptoms of the socially constructed condition (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The lived battle to survive is not implicit in the anatomy or diversity of the targeted (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). The truth is that when oppressors evoke it, with their vague essence, they neglect the fact that they are abusing the targets' identical rights and freedoms. This duality was not originally attached to any divisions or imbalances, and was not dependent upon any empirical facts (Beauvoir, 1949), but was merely the abuse of a falsified, manipulated, silenced and hidden situation (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Those who challenge oppressors must be aware of possible retaliation, as bullies can, and often do, turn situations on their head and claim that they are the ones who are being oppressed (Beauvoir, 1949). Oppressors' *projection* processes direct their own repugnant behaviours onto their victims and label victims as guilty and responsible

(Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Victims can therefore develop an increased propensity to absorb unwarranted fault (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). One must not *embody* projected undue blame, nor back down from the factual truth (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970) as this inauthenticity will further objectify and distance victims from the ultimate goals of transcendence and freedom (Beauvoir, 1949).

Perhaps it is permissible to dream of a future when men will know no other use of their freedom than this free unfurling of itself; constructive activity would be possible for all; each one would be able to aim positively through his projects at his own future. But today the fact is that there are men who can justify their life only by a negative action. As we have already seen, every man transcends himself. But it happens that this transcendence is condemned to fall uselessly back upon itself because it is cut off from its goals. That is what defines a situation of oppression. Such a situation is never natural. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 81)

Beauvoir stresses the importance of the inward understanding of the personal experience as the responsible and authentic source of information regarding oppressive conditions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

## Lived Abuse

There 'is' no recipe for life that will spare you from pain, sorrow, and loneliness. Rather than telling people fairytales, literature should disseminate this truth. Only on this basis can optimism truly exist. (Beauvoir, 1972, p. 499)

Oppression is a process in which there is a prolonged and repeated subjugation (Beauvoir, 1970). The development of oppressive conditions begins with narcissistic individuals who are threatened by the weight of others' freedom, enthusiasm and individuality (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). Egotistical individuals feel the paradox of their existence. They feel the need to be the supreme entities, but their quest for supremacy results in treating Others as instruments to achieve their own goals, since without Others, they cannot dominate. The more widespread their mechanisms of manipulation and propaganda, the more damage they cause (Beauvoir, 1947). They become ultimate bullies (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Oppressors seek others to assist them in achieving their selfish and damaging goals as well in helping them conceal their impotence, an impotence masked by arrogance (Beauvoir, 1947). They await a vital difference<sup>27</sup> or critical incident<sup>28</sup> to persecute relentlessly (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). With these two elements, the dishonest oppressors lose themselves in their tyranny (Beauvoir, 1947). From one moment to the next, individuals go from subjectivity to objectivity (Beauvoir, 1970). They make

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<sup>27</sup> That is, any disparity that can be rationalized as inferior by oppressors

<sup>28</sup> That is, any incident that can be misrepresented and censored by oppressors

decisions to obstruct Others' freedom, hence their own, and force competent and compassionate individuals into absurdity. Others become victims (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Once they have become aware of their deplorable condition, targets may try everything to flee the abuse. However if oppressors are met with much resistance, the level of cruelty increases, as does the relentlessness toward another target, advocate or anyone who stands in opposition (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). Oppressors misrepresent Others' words and actions and censure what they claim is a fixed essence for their victims (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

They continue undermining others' freedom by creating pre-planned scenarios to torment, harass and humiliate, all of which are disguised by false intentions (Beauvoir, 1947). They aggressively infiltrate diverse aspects of their victims' lives and purposefully exclude their victims from pertinent appointments, engagements and general integrations. These hate-perpetrators instill fear in order to petrify and impede productivity and block positive efforts (Beauvoir, 1970). Oppressors start finding allies willing to participate in abusive mobbing. The *ringleaders* recruit "those who do the actual dirty work." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 44) They turn one against another with fabrications and accusations (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The abuse starts with malicious individuals and then casts an *invisible* wide net as tyrants get people involved and angry with their web of lies. The damaging inauthenticity intensifies (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Tormentors work diligently to maintain the victims' isolation and silence (Beauvoir, 1947). They instill mistrust between their allies and victims. They create scenarios to prevent any positive inter-relational opportunities

with others and to avoid anyone questioning the mystifications and *false harmony* should the oppressed speak out. The abuse is not meant to be seen or heard. Bullies deny all that they do, then diffuse their actions by turning around and claiming they are the ones being bullied (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The tyrants provoke their victims, hoping to cause a reaction and break all resistance. They attempt to make their victims appear neurotic and unstable (Beauvoir, 1949). They discriminate, villainize and paralyze their victims (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) to the point of potentially inducing catatonic states (Beauvoir, 1949). This abuse is bullying, and in the instances of undermining and tormenting jointly with allies, it becomes a mobbing situation. Bullies violently hinder personal freedom. They breach human rights (Beauvoir, 1947).

Victims hope that “[i]n spite of so many stubborn lies, at every moment, at every opportunity, the truth comes to light.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 9) Unfortunately, tyrants love gossip (Beauvoir, 1963) and spread untrue and harmful stories (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Somehow, all problems end up resting on the victims. Victims are perplexed as they learn how evil and *ill-willed* other humans can be (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Victims are petrified and anxious as they have seen the tyrants

so systematically relentless in casting into abjection the men they wanted to destroy: the disgust which the victims felt in regard to themselves stifled the voice of revolt and justified the executioners in their own eyes. All oppressive regimes become stronger through the degradation of the oppressed. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 101)

There is the truth of victims' solitude, of their lost freedom (Beauvoir, 1947). Their servitude has been hidden very carefully (Beauvoir, 1947). For living authentically, asserting their equality and individuality, they are punished and forced into a destructive and subordinate position. Victims continually get pushed into further submission and encounter increased levels of disrespectful behaviours and hostility, often by complete strangers, aligned with the tyrants (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Herein lies the deplorable lived experience of oppression where finding meaning in the given condition seems impossible (Beauvoir, 1970).

A victim can feel the external tension as well as the internal *ambiguous* struggle (Beauvoir, 1947). However the bully

will then be tempted to put everything into question, to renounce, thus denying both himself and his ends; or, if he persists, he will continue to blind himself only by multiplying crimes and by perverting his original design more and more. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 153)

The ill-intended influence peddlers keep repressing; with their tactics, they keep information from societal and individual consciousness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Evil is fueled through the missed acknowledgement of its capacity to harm (Beauvoir, 1947). Victims are confused, they question the meaning of their condition and they feel hopeless (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Their existence is impacted to the point of absorbing and embodying the surrounding negativity (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They feel stuck without resources with which to achieve transcendence and freedom. The struggle for survival is evident for victims as they must contend with blatant dishonesty and multi-



layered cover-ups (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The abused begin to appear dysfunctional, and find it impossible to feel healthy in such an unhealthy situation (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Victims want to be left 'in peace', but at every turn, bullies find other ways to terrorize them (Beauvoir, 1949).

Victims become increasingly withdrawn and start protecting themselves as a consequence of oppression. Deceitful oppressors turn the targets' coping mechanisms into faults and they continue the ruse of the abuse by projecting the blame for new incidents on the oppressed. Bullied individuals become scapegoats (Beauvoir, 1949). The oppressed become further victimized and lack the concrete means to move past the abuse. They try to go forward with the truth, but it's too late. The vicious liars have already controlled their allies, the blind and other easily influenced individuals (Beauvoir, 1947).

Victims need to transcend the vicious cycle, but feel trapped (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). How do victims start *being-for-themselves* (Beauvoir, 1947)? What bullies do is so perverse and insidious that it may be hard to believe (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Such evil is difficult to comprehend... but dare to believe the victims (Beauvoir, 1946):

[...] but here we have one of the truths of Stoicism: a man must assume even these misfortunes, and since he must never resign himself in favor of any *thing*, no destruction of a thing will ever be a radical ruin for him; even his death is not an evil since he is man only insofar as he is mortal: he must assume it as the natural limit of his life, as the risk implied by every step. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 81-82)

Understanding that life is a continuous build-up and breakdown of life's obstacles, the key issue in a retrospective review of the lived experience is the process of disclosure. Beauvoir calls for a comprehensive investigation of the knowledge gained through existing in such an abusive condition (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). It is “necessary to expose the mystification and to put the men who are its victims in the presence of their freedom.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 98) For a long time, there have been efforts to conceal the misfortune of oppression (Beauvoir, 1949), and since we do not succeed by ignoring and allowing bullies to continue, let us then inquire into the lived experience (Beauvoir, 1947).

As we have seen, my freedom, in order to fulfill itself, requires that it emerge into an open future: it is other men who open the future to me, it is they who, setting up the world of tomorrow, define my future; but if, instead of allowing me to participate in this constructive movement, they oblige me to consume my transcendence in vain, if they keep me below the level which they have conquered and on the basis of which new conquests will be achieved, then they are cutting me off from the future, they are changing me into a thing. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82)

Having an abridged outline of patients' occurrences may create the idea of a straightforward set of circumstances (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Therefore it is imperative to remember that in actuality, a clinical case presents certain distinctions, more comprehensive details and complete analyses.

Table 13

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
He escapes the anguish of freedom only to fall into a state of preoccupation, of worry (Beauvoir, 1947).	Instead of making decisions regarding your own daily existence, you are propelled into survival mode.
Instead of aggrandizing the reign of the human, he opposes his inert resistance to the projects of other men. No project has meaning in the world disclosed by such an existence (Beauvoir, 1947).	It is not ethical or valuable for bullies to seek putting you down to elevate themselves.
We should regard the [the victim's] nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness (Beauvoir, 1949).	Targets get labelled.
There were some experiences that each individual lived through alone (Beauvoir, 1960).	You have been isolated so that no one sees the bullying.
That is why the whole question is buried in a conspiracy of silence (Beauvoir, 1970).	You have been silenced so that no one hears the truth about the bullying you have experienced.
And in bad faith they take	

<p>authorization from this to declare that [the target] has desired the destiny that has been imposed (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>Bullies turn everything around on you and make others believe that you are to blame.</p>
<p>A freedom which is occupied in denying freedom is itself so outrageous [...] (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Choosing to bully an individual or a group of persons is a despicable existence.</p>
<p>[There are] innumerable conflicts that set men and women against one another (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>Bullies undermine and create mobbing situations, by pinning people against one another. People that you had no previous issues with will start to treat you differently.</p>
<p>[T]he essential characteristic of the situation against which he is rebelling is precisely prohibiting him from any positive development (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>You are starting to act differently because of your circumstance, but you are effectively paralyzed.</p>
<p>[The oppressor will] put everything into question, to renounce [...] he persists, he will continue to blind himself only by multiplying crimes and by perverting his original design more and more (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Bullies will discredit everything that you do and say, and will keep perpetuating violations.</p>
<p>All the same, there have been certain</p>	<p>Enduring the whispering and glares is</p>

<p>whispers, certain looks that I have found it hard to bear (Beauvoir, 1963).</p>	<p>difficult to endure.</p>
<p>Given even the slightest encouragement, he would have made up the story right then and there (Beauvoir, 1954).</p>	<p>Bullies will make up stories in an instant; however, you have experienced a loss of the diversity of argument.</p>
<p>I was seeking for the absolute truth: this preoccupation did not exactly encourage polite conversation (Beauvoir, 1958).</p>	<p>Talking about the truth, you will likely face denial, anger and retaliation.</p>
<p>I concern others (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Our interconnectedness makes bullying possible. Abusers use this to their advantage. They spitefully intrude in their victims' lives.</p>
<p>That is what makes criticism so easy [...]: the critic is always in a good position to show the limits [...] (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>People can say anything with their <i>useless mouths</i>.</p>
<p>Dishonestly ignoring the subjectivity of his choice, he pretends that the unconditioned value of the object is being asserted through him; and by the same token he also ignores the value</p>	<p>Bullies employ disrespectful and unethical tactics. They ask: Who are you? What are you doing here? Implying that they are</p>

<p>of the subjectivity and the freedom of others, to such an extent that, sacrificing them to the thing, he persuades himself that what he sacrifices is nothing (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>superior, and that they decide who <i>is</i> and who should be granted <i>inclusion</i>.</p>
<p>[The oppressed] feels [he/]she is behaving like a beggar when [he/]she is convinced of the high value of [his/]her gifts (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>You struggle for means of claiming your value and meaning.</p>
<p>I felt myself an exile, whose one remedy against solitude lay in self-expression (Beauvoir, 1958).</p>	<p>Isolated and silenced, you feel you cannot acknowledge your condition... self expression through writing your story will become invaluable.</p>
<p>[The oppressed] has first been shut up ... shut up in his or her sphere (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>You have been completely silenced and isolated.</p>
<p>[The oppressed] does not assert [his/]her demands as a subject because [he/]she lacks the concrete means (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>You have searched for answers and simply cannot find a way out of the oppressive situation.</p>
<p>Sometimes I would fly into a rage at being treated as a child when I thought I was a fully-developed person</p>	<p>You may lose control as you are being reduced and treated abusively. It is <i>normal</i> to act <i>abnormally</i> in an <i>abnormal</i></p>

(Beauvoir, 1972)	condition.
Even if the body does send us signals, they are ambiguous (Beauvoir, 1970).	You know that things are not right, you feel ill, but you may not realize what you feel is beyond your embodiment of symptoms.
At the bottom, life is concerned only in the survival of the [oppressed] as a whole; at the top, life seeks expression through particular individuals, while accomplishing also the survival of the group (Beauvoir, 1949).	You are surviving for yourself... and potentially surviving for all who have been bullied...
In life, you're constantly denying yourself, and others are always contradicting you. On paper, I make time stand still and I impose my convictions on the whole world; they become the only reality (Beauvoir, 1954).	Make sure you have your abuse documented in every way possible.

Table 14

*Home Exercise*

Chronicle!

- Create a recorded log, as documentation, with as much detail (such as times and dates) outlining the incidents of abuse that you experienced by the oppressor. Should you have any ‘supporting evidence’ (such as emails and witnesses), add that to your log.
- Also keep a record of all that has been brought to your attention, and by whom, regarding all of the oppressor’s breaches and violations against you: what the oppressor has done and said about you, any invasion of privacy or infiltration into your private life, any labeling, any harmful misrepresentations and perjuring (Beauvoir, 1970), any slander or character assassination (Beauvoir, 1949), any exploitation, any silencing or isolation, any purposeful exclusion from pertinent engagements, any damaging manipulation, any malicious alignments against you and all other human rights violations perpetrated against you (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).
- Keep these two above-mentioned items together in a ‘Chronicling file’ and do not let the oppressor know of the supporting proof that you have, with respect to the abuse and human rights violations. Because for our private records, our social records and our legal records, there is no other truth than a statistical one (Beauvoir, 1947).

\*Progressive Purpose: Should you need to pursue policy and/or legal action, this may be your weapon in the battle for freedom (Beauvoir, 1949).



## Chapter 8

### Revolt

During the fourth phase of Beauvoirian Therapy, we reflect on the patient's lived experience and empathetically support the consequential depression with which the patient presents. For Beauvoir, the worst thing to do to someone is to imprison him or her. Oppression is metaphysical imprisonment and therefore, nothing is more depressing (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). We focus on patients' internalized oppression manifesting into physiological symptoms (Beauvoir, 1949). We suggest that patients embrace their depression and understand its meaning and purpose. Depression is revolt.

Table 15

*Education as a Form of Intervention*

#### Edifying Notes

- Beauvoir understands that *re-living* and recounting oppressive lived experiences stimulates the internalized and suppressed emotions and allows for *therapeutic purging* (Beauvoir, 1949).
- Beauvoir claims that we cannot fully grasp another's experience, so we should not form opinions regarding how they are affected. Changes in cognition and behaviour occur, for *self-preservation* as a result of changed circumstances. Trying to defend and adjust is an inherent response

(Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

- For Beauvoir, one cannot be *healthy* in an *unhealthy*, unnatural social condition. Depression is hence a functional and natural reaction to oppression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).
- It is only in a personal, social and political struggle that victims can surpass the abuses of oppression (Beauvoir, 1947).
- Defending the truth is not something one does out of a sense of duty. It is a necessity for therapeutic healing (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).
- Revolt must be attached to meaningfulness, optimistic possibilities and hopeful transcendence for both personal and collective gain (Beauvoir, 1947).

Table 16

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
How do you feel about finally speaking out?
How do you feel about knowing that your depression may be a key source for empowerment, encouragement and action?
Does society make you feel shame and guilt for doing and declaring things that are necessary?
Do you realize that the greatest task is for you to liberate yourself?

How do you plan on making crucial differences in your condition?
Do you realize that you may speak out and tell your story if someone steps on your personal freedom?
Explain how potentially, through the <i>darkness</i> of depression, you can find enlightenment?
Explain your difficulties in feeling and acting <i>normal</i> in such an <i>abnormal</i> condition?
Do you realize that through this anguish you are able to find consciousness of the dynamics of your lived experience?
Do you realize that your depression can be used as a privileged source of perception and knowledge?
Explain your anguish and despair regarding the abuse you have endured.
Do you feel frantic and/or uncertain in this state of alienation?
When you are anxious, do you feel that your body is pushing you toward something?
Should we discuss anything else before moving on to Beauvoirian principles?

### *Beauvoirian Principles*

According to Beauvoir, no factor affects an individual's psyche without having stemmed from a lived experience and a given human significance (Beauvoir, 1947). The *givens* of existence, shaped by individuals or collective groups, are expressed by the oppressed through cognitive functions, behavioral actions and bodily symptoms

(Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Surviving the appalling, multifaceted circumstances of oppression affects the oppressed to the point that they lose their optimism and enthusiasm (Beauvoir, 1947). In confronting the harsh reality of their *devaluation* and suffering, individuals fall into a *reactive* depression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir identifies the profound sadness (Beauvoir, 1949) that oppressed persons feel and blames unnatural and forceful construction of widespread ideologies, the will to power, societal rankism and overall complacency and permissiveness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) for such suffering (Beauvoir, 1967). She declares that it is necessary to address depression in at-risk populations at the social level (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1967; 1970) as well as at the individual psychological level (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). As with the social construct of oppression, the nature of the social construction of depression itself also reflects unhealthy and dysfunctional societal values (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The oppressed has only one solution: to deny the harmony of that mankind from which an attempt is made to exclude him, to prove that he is a man and that he is free by revolting against the tyrants. In order to prevent this revolt, one of the ruses of oppression is to camouflage itself behind a natural situation since, after all, one can not revolt against nature (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82-83).

### Depression as a Social Construct

Beauvoir explains in detail the manner in which the socially constructed phenomenon of hidden and silent oppression is fundamentally a reflection of societies'

ideologies, unconsciousness and permissiveness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). These negative principles, in turn, can greatly affect and harm the psychological health of individuals (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Beauvoir uncompromisingly places blame on the general population for the high prevalence and incidence rates of depression in oppressed persons (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

This type of abuse is unfortunately widespread with the immense pervasiveness of bullying as well as other forms of systematic psychological violence. These conditions allow *power-hungry* individuals to lie, maneuver and sabotage (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) in order to prevent the victimized from rebelling; oppressors conceal their social abuses (Beauvoir, 1947).

The abuses inflicted on people by a society dominated by oppressive tyrants are absorbed by the victim and become internal pain, pain which is transformed into an internalized invisible malady (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). This ailment is forced upon the victims by the, quite often, *silent* and *invisible* harm being caused. The oppressed begin to feel ill as a consequence of their ill conditions. Moreover, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain functionality in a dysfunctional situation (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Consequently, the oppressed feel anguished and lonely within a world of indifference (Beauvoir, 1949). Oppression is repressed, settles in the psyche of the individuals, and takes shape as depression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Having endured such maliciousness and having being cut off from freedom and transcendence, people suffering from depression are actually displaying a healthy reaction to a very unhealthy situation (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

## Depression as Conscious Awareness

Beauvoir outlines the journey to conscious awareness that begins as victims allow themselves to *awaken* through the inward disturbance of oppression: depression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). According to Beauvoir, oppressed persons who suffer from depression consciously or unconsciously experience the progression and development of realistic and accurate perceptions with respect to being victimized (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Albeit often somewhat unaware, through a synthesis of their lived experiences and newly established perspectives, the oppressed gain a considerable degree of discernment not only about the *silent and hidden* abuse, but also with respect to the oppressors themselves (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Progressively, patients recognize that their subjugation was about their oppressors' impotence and arrogance (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) and they recognize the seriousness of the situation.

Bullies care “only for their pleasure or their glory.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 61) Those who dominate may choose to declare that the oppressed have *a lack* (Beauvoir, 1949) of qualities such as intelligence (Beauvoir, 1947), productivity (Beauvoir, 1970), and perception (Beauvoir, 1949). However, on the contrary, their condition has made them acutely aware of the gaze of others, of their interconnectivity with others and of the ever-present struggle to attain metaphysical freedom (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Through their depressive state, oppressed persons achieve deeper introspection. This analysis, in turn, allows for a painstaking examination of oppressive conditions as well as the overarching permissive structures that allow such hidden and silent abuses to occur (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). When their psychological state is altered by existing in a dysfunctional environment, it is representative of a *surfacing* of an understanding of the

true recognition of freedom or lack thereof. Imprisoned victims become aware that there must be an upheaval, a denial of *their freedom denied* (Beauvoir, 1947). Once acutely aware of their imprisonment by an imposition on their liberty, depressed victims aspire to be free to surpass what is an inauthentic abuse of power on freedom to an *open future* (Beauvoir, 1947). Victims are hence more accurate and realistic in their perception of the overall social condition (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Victims inadvertently begin to react to systemic injustice (Beauvoir, 1949). They may have begun their journey unaware of a required moral exigency (Beauvoir, 1947) but have become acutely aware that the oppressed can only fulfill their freedom in an intentional, meaningful revolt against oppression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). This is not an easy challenge to face as the essential characteristics of the situation against which victims need to rebel is precisely what prohibits them from going forward with the lived experience of abuse (Beauvoir, 1947).

Victims become depressed as they are aware of what is the real *social illness*, yet they find themselves at an impasse (Beauvoir, 1949). The depressed individuals feel a certain tension but still may not understand its meaning. Although victims become discouraged by the concrete conditions that those living inauthentically create, the inner tension, the depression can be the source of new consciousness that developed throughout their experience (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). The perception stemming from depression can, in due course, lead to the recognition of the patient's role in creating better circumstances and can effectively shape what they will do (Beauvoir, 1947).

## Depression as a Symptom of Protest

Depression is a reflection of an inner struggle between interpreting lived experiences and the inner strength in dealing with the trauma. When people are victimized, they often absorb and internalize the manipulations, lies and misinformation. The oppressed suffer from devaluation and deprivation. This deprivation, however, develops an acute awareness that may transform into a reaction (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Among the various consequences of oppression are withdrawal, anxiety and depression. Such responses are many aspects of cognition and behavior that should be understood as forms of protest (Beauvoir, 1949). This brings patients to moral distress as their mind and body are indicating the need for change, but the victims feel unable to transcend the existential givens.

According to Beauvoir, it is catastrophic to be going through life and to realize at one point or another that you are in a corrupt and manipulated oppressive condition (Beauvoir, 1970). Depression can therefore be viewed as the necessary evil to find understanding and meaning within metaphysical constraints and to facilitate claiming subjectivity and other open possibilities (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The victims' anguish is the direct result of the suppressed inner conflict and struggle of the imposed circumstances in which they exist (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

After the victims' encounter and confrontation with their *accumulated* lived experiences, they are permitted to feel, permitted to acknowledge the suffering they have absorbed through the ordeal (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970), and their internalized feelings are validated through introspection (Beauvoir, 1947). The lived mutilation and devaluation has turned to extreme internal psychological *pain* (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949;



1970). This cognitive process and related pain is the normal reaction for the abnormal condition (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The patients can begin to deconstruct the multifactorial nature of their condition to understand that their agony represents their mind-body experience as well as the continual development of conscious awareness of the gravity of the abuse. The affirmations are cathartic and bring on a comforting hope for change. The extreme pain is presenting itself as movement, as a spectrum of possibilities (Beauvoir, 1947).

The deeper victims dig into the reality of what tyrants do and pull off, the more insight they gain. The more insight they gain, the greater the internal pain they feel (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). And the greater this pain, the more they start to reject it. Depression is, hence, the acknowledgement of unacceptable conditions and the first step in rejecting the status quo (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

By expanding consciousness, victims experience 'depressive realism' in a new state. This new awareness can be viewed as a gift *on the side of* happiness (Beauvoir, 1947) as it is through anguish that we seek meaning and hope (Beauvoir, 1947). In rejecting their conditions, the oppressed have commenced demystifying them. It becomes apparent that depression and its potential associated active anxiety can, in fact, become the catalysts in a call for awareness and subsequently, a call to change the hidden societal values and permissiveness (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

This rejection cuts off the will of the oppressor, in his turn,  
from the future toward which he was hoping to thrust  
himself alone: another future is substituted, that of  
revolution. The struggle is not one of words and ideologies;

it is real and concrete, if it is this future which triumphs,  
and not the former, then it is the oppressed who is realized  
as a positive and open freedom. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 84)

Denying and denouncing oppression interrupts the will of the oppressor and breaks the continuity of the abuse, thus allowing for a liberated and meaningful future.

Herein lies a pivotal instance. Human experiences inform conscious awareness. The key symptom is depression; by evolving into symptomatic signals, expelling the unifying unethical principles that had been formerly repressed, depression becomes the vital factor in attaining a clear perception of what is mystified (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Revolt is the only solution to healing from depression caused by oppression (Beauvoir, 1947). One cannot refuse to embrace protest (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

#### Anxiety as an Outward Reactive Manifestation

“Moral anxiety does not come to man from without” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 72), but is outwardly expressed. As depression is the surfacing of the awareness of oppression, anxiety is the physical launch of the revolt itself. This type of angst can be considered the gateway to constructive intentional activity with a view to deconstruct oppression and reconstruct the self and the collective Others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

As the limitations of oppression increase, the victims’ symptoms continue to increase and can no longer be ignored. These symptoms further alert the victim to the reality of the situation. It becomes a matter of an emotional *fight*<sup>29</sup> or *flight*<sup>30</sup>. Victims’

ways and being change within oppressed conditions. Their internal emotions reveal the gravity of the situation.

In Beauvoirian Therapy depression and anxiety are separated as they perform different functions. Depression is the inward reaction to the oppressive reality, whereas anxiety is the outward physical reaction to oppression, which serves to propel action and to find solutions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Healing and transformation continue as the depression from the lived experience begins to present symptoms of anxiety and existential angst (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). For Beauvoir, these are neither maladaptive nor dysfunctional symptoms that need to be removed. Rather, anxiety is the active physical manifestation of the reactive depression that the victim experiences (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).

Anxiety is a *violent crisis* which can be revealed in revolt (Beauvoir, 1949). “[T]he oppressed can fulfill his freedom as a man only in revolt.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 87) As soon as human ambiguity is revealed, depression surfaces as a natural response. A meeting of internal and external symptoms create a *favourable* event because the cycle is broken and one finds the physical push to finally feel a renewed sense of life (Beauvoir, 1949). Hence, anxiety can motivate the desire for action and change through physically

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<sup>29</sup> Fight: Getting supportive help through psychotherapy which can create hope and reveal possibilities.

<sup>30</sup> Flight: Ignoring the symptoms which can enclose the victim further in immanence.

rejecting oppression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Anxiety reveals the meaning behind one's depression and signals the need for positive change (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Anxiety is not a symptom to be removed; rather it is the driving force to explore human ambiguity and its corollaries, choice and free will (Beauvoir, 1947). If we ignore this desire, we may not find intentionality from the givens of oppression and we may fall back into immanence (Beauvoir, 1947). Consequently, the existential angst is potentially the primordial source of motivation to heighten responsiveness, as one rejects the illness by understanding the contributing circumstances and ultimately searching for a cure (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Anxiety is the culmination of having lived in an oppressive condition, having fallen into a subsequent depression, which in turn gave rise to an awareness of the situation and resulted in the physical manifestation of the motivation and desire to improve victims' outcomes. With the understanding of the physical manifestations of such existential angst and anxiety, victims cannot fail to demand the re-establishment of their sovereignty (Beauvoir, 1949). Anxiety is at once the burden of concern, fear and doubt, as well as the acknowledgement of decision and free will (Beauvoir, 1947).

#### Anxiety as Desire

“[T]he world [...] is revealed only through rejection, desire, hate and love.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 78) To revolt against oppression includes the rejection of social permissiveness, imbalanced constraints and camouflaged abuse. This rejection takes on a positive mission as one rejects oppression by combating it at every level (Beauvoir, 1947). However, the quest for the meaning of oppression may allow the victim to move

forward and to become aware of the magnitude of the abuse. He or she may then draw on their new-found strength to battle oppression and make his or her own decisions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). The strengthened force in a positive field can, consequently, lead the victim to liberty (Beauvoir, 1947).

In experiencing a reactive depression, victims internalize manifestations of their ailment. This reality is significant, as the inward expression of absorbed experiences provides an inner state that, when expressed, albeit painful and difficult, pushes victims to an invaluable state of consciousness. Should this protest become fuelled by providing the oppressed with a transcendent meaning, the depression may turn into anxiety. This angst is uniquely transmissible and the basis on which victims may question what needs to be *managed and treated* (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Comparatively speaking, depression can thus be considered the inward, relatively passive, physical reaction to oppression. This can be the root of both protest and desire for improved social conditions. Anxiety is the outward active physical reaction posing as the powerful driving desire for liberty. It can be the source of transcendent growth and harnessed with a view to moving toward healing, personally and collectively (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Instead of suppressing anxiety, patients are advised to use it as grounds for change.

Depression and anxiety are responses to oppression, hence, the foundation of hope.

It is from within a rejected situation, in the light of this rejection, that a new state appears as desirable; only the will of men decides; and it is on the basis of a certain

individual act [...] that this will thrusts itself, toward the future and then chooses a perspective where such words as goal, progress, efficacy, success, failure, action, adversaries, instruments, and obstacles, have a meaning. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 18-19).

There is optimism in revolt. It is the power of knowing that we are not dominated by unnatural forces, posing as predetermined, imbalanced principles (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Internal power evolves from facing great despair, and what emerges is the power of revolt. Revolt is to proclaim and denounce the *imposed limits* on current conditions and to open oneself to choices and decisions (Beauvoir, 1947).

Table 17

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
[The oppressed] feels [he/]she is under no obligation to deal gently with the favoured caste, and [his/]her only thought is to defend herself (Beauvoir, 1949).	When the situation is being turned onto you, remember that oppressors use whatever they can against their victims. Your priority is you, your defence. Should you be emotional, it is because it is an emotionally-charged situation.
Revolt is not integrated into the harmonious development of the world; it does not wish to be integrated but	It is necessary to break the continuity of bullying, but sometimes things get

<p>rather to explode at the heart of the world and to break its continuity (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>unpleasant before getting better.</p>
<p>I had contributed to creating this situation that had been imposed on me (Beauvoir, 1960).</p>	<p>Complacency is culpability.</p>
<p>It is the needs of people, the revolt of a class, which define aims and goals (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Revolting against abuse aims at concrete conditions, where humans can mutually respect one another and create a meaningful existence.</p>
<p>Thus one finds himself in the presence of the paradox that no action can be generated for man without its being immediately generated against men (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>It may seem counter-intuitive to revolt.</p>
<p>[F]or the universe of revolutionary values to arise, a subjective movement must create them in revolt and hope (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Revolt is an optimistic and positive movement based on principles of hope.</p>
<p>[I]t necessary to maintain the tension of revolt against a situation to which one does not wish to consent at any price (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>The fight for freedom will not be easy, but do not give up.</p>

Table 18

*Home Exercise*

Bucket List!

- Embracing the message of depression and using it as the driving force for personal and societal change, create a list of ways that you would like to channel your message for your greater good and the collective greater good.

We must try, through our living projects, to turn to our own account that freedom which was undertaken in the past and to integrate it into the present world.

(Beauvoir, 1947, p. 93)

How will you make a meaningful difference?



## Chapter 9

### Healing Depression and Anxiety

For the fifth stage of therapy, with optimism, we join the patient in his or her transcendence. “With regard to the past, no further action is possible” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 77), “[h]uman transcendence then seeks, with the destruction of the given situation, the whole future which will flow from its victory.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 31)

Table 19

#### *Education as a Form of Intervention*

<p>Edifying Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being aware that you may protest your condition can bring you back to subjectivity. In choosing freedom<sup>31</sup>, you become subject. Reclaiming freedom is a choice and decision (Beauvoir, 1947).</li><li>• Choice; deciding to choose is when the <i>cure</i> begins (Beauvoir, 1947). You are not stuck in oppression if you choose liberty.</li><li>• “Moral choice is free, and therefore unforeseeable.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 40)</li></ul>
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<sup>31</sup> Choosing freedom entails accepting the responsibilities and limits that come with freedom.

- You have your story, written by you through Beauvoirian Therapy. Should you decide, feel free to share your experience.
- Once you have decided on freedom; you are no longer a victim, you are a survivor.
- Give your journey meaning (Beauvoir, 1944). Make it your message (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).
- The conversion around making the decision to *going forward as subject*, as a survivor, can start within passion itself. It is the condition within which the survivor's meaning, purpose and hope are disclosed (Beauvoir, 1947).
- Reconstructing oneself as a survivor implies moving from a determined, asymmetrical and immanent state through free transcendence.
- There must be, however, caution in moving forward as exposing and rejecting oppressor's abuse can further provoke his or her negativity and anger. You must protect yourself and stay consistent with your overall positive direction. Once they do not matter anymore, you can enjoy all of your positive situations (Beauvoir, 1949).

Table 20

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
What does “to will oneself free” mean to you?
How will you choose to live your life?
What will guide your choices?
How do you feel about having had your natural freedom taken from you?
If life is understood looking back, what will you take from it moving forward?
How will you now launch yourself fully into the stream of life?
What do you think would have happened if you had taken a stand by going <i>public</i> with your experience?
What do you think will happen if you do not take a stand moving forward?
Which structures are you going to reject?
Do you understand that one can find hope, meaning and courage in all conditions?
When you envisage your future, do you consider a movement which will fulfill your present visions and will surpass them toward new ends?
Do you have any other thoughts before discussing Beauvoirian principles?

## *Beauvoirian Principles*

Beauvoir underscores many negative ramifications of oppression. Rather than issues, such as depression and revolt, being recognized as a consequence of the abuse, they are often turned into *labels* and/or *causes* implying that the oppressed is to blame (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). In fact, according to Beauvoir, targets are the scapegoats for all that is amiss, including the relentless rage of the oppressors (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). Targets of oppression live a struggle, being victimized by mutilating accusations, exclusion and other abuses (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They survive and envision their despairing destiny and an overall deadening of humanity (Beauvoir, 1970) if they continually fall back into immanence (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). The oppressed realize the intentional devastation and destruction of the tyrants by means of distortion and manipulation reified as natural (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The oppressed have effectively survived in a modern-day battle-field (Beauvoir, 1947) where *dictators* abuse, lie, manipulate, mystify, isolate, silence, suffocate and *kill* (Beauvoir, 1947) without being brought to justice (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The targets become tired (Beauvoir, 1970) from having experienced the despair which, in turn, has led them to conscious awareness of the permitted evils (Beauvoir, 1947). The combination of depression with the newly created perception can lead to further physiological responses: depression and existential anxiety. However, oppression is not a condition from which there is 'no exit' (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir's analyses culminate in a very important issue in the quest for liberty: the desire to improve one's outcome (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). By surviving the lived experience of oppressive conditions, developing the conscious awareness of the

hidden dysfunctional abuses, and through the process of depressive and anxiety, victims can draw on a developed motivation and its strengths to analyze choices and make decisions to transcend their current givens (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). For the oppressed, it is not a question of wondering whether their existence is useful, whether pursuing absolute moral values is worth the trouble. For Beauvoir, these questions make no sense. Rather, the fundamental issue is knowing under what conditions they will accept to live (Beauvoir, 1947).

Beauvoir states that our existence is always faced with *opposing choices* (Beauvoir, 1947). For bullied individuals, it is a matter of knowing and deciding to choose how one should live and what conditions are acceptable (Beauvoir, 1947). It is no longer acceptable to endure torment, psychological subjugation and aggression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Beauvoir explains that victims need to be *awakened* to the fact that oppression is a condition that can be transformed (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The victim has the power within to choose freedom (Beauvoir, 1947). “[B]y dedicating itself to this positivity can the negative henceforth return to the positive.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 117) From an oppressive condition through the process and enlightenment of depression, victims acquire judgment to face ongoing choices with a new perspective (Beauvoir, 1947). “[I]t is the moment for choice and action” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 76) and for an *ethics of ambiguity* to reveal the freedom to decide and chose (Beauvoir, 1947).

As they are emancipated from the darkness of oppression, victims become *in control* to denounce unequivocally the diseased social condition and move forward with their transcendent decisions. According to Beauvoir, life naturally changes and

progresses (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Making decisions through focused choices, the patient builds facilitating structures aimed at positive, prospective movement (Beauvoir, 1947). Beauvoir is very clear on the need to choose between authenticity and bad faith (Beauvoir, 1947).

By making the decision to be free, victims can surpass themselves, as they can now live more fully rather than simply resigning themselves to *not dying* from their condition (Beauvoir, 1947). All that Beauvoirian Therapy can strategize

is to put the oppressed in the presence of his freedom: then he will decide positively and freely. The fact is that he decides against oppression, and it is then that the movement of emancipation really begins. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 87)

Through choosing freedom, victims have perpetuated and surpassed their alterity, the imposed definition as Other. “[A]s soon as [an individual] decides he [or she] assumes it.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 33) Victims become survivors. They choose to become survivors. Survivors protest their condition and propel themselves back to subjectivity. By claiming subjectivity, they are free to choose their therapeutic and meaningful ventures. Survivors are subjects and they make their own decisions about their existence and life experiences. They are free to be heard and free to exert their individuality (Beauvoir, 1947).

Individuals justify their existence “by a movement which, like freedom, springs from [the] heart but which leads outside of [themselves].” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 156)

After having developed the conscious awareness of oppression, and having suffered its resulting depression, individuals can face choices and make decisions. By following their internal desire and allowing the related anxiety to propel them into action

for personal and societal change, oppressed victims add to their *ever-creating essence* (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They have exerted choice. They are morally free (Beauvoir, 1947) to keep these positive choices in forward movement toward personal and societal improvements. To emancipate survivors is to refuse confinements in relationships, occupations and freedom (Beauvoir, 1949).

For Beauvoir, it is up to survivors to establish the reign of liberty and to gain supreme freedom. It is necessary for everyone to accept each other's individuality and equality and band together, in their *natural differentiation* to affirm their interconnectedness, respect and mutual freedom (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Every individual's lived experiences are vital in understanding that this world is shared by all. Achieving functional and *healthy* systems requires special interconnectedness which involves concern, responsibility and reciprocal respect (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

By living *for-oneseif* in a responsible, respectful and socially-balanced state, individuals may find meaning gained from past situations and they may exert their free will to draw on their capacity for self-directed optimistic growth (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

It is from within a consciously protested situation that a new condition appears as desirable (Beauvoir, 1947). The rejection will present possibilities and choices upon which victims can decide. Through the assertion of anxiety, patients can *will* and thrust themselves into acts aimed at a liberated transcendence. If they decide to move forward with intentionality, meaningfulness and moral freedom (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970), they move forward toward liberating interconnectivity and conscious action (Beauvoir, 1949).

The decisions stemming from a positive revolt help to define survivors' aims and goals. It is from within a rejected condition and the anxiety to move forward that options are presented and become desirable (Beauvoir, 1947). Survivors decide to choose their trajectory (Beauvoir, 1947). Survivors are transformed and are no longer mere objects responding to surrounding negative social forces (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

A choice will become possible in the light of the future,  
which is the meaning of tomorrow because the present  
appears as the facticity which must be transcended toward  
freedom. No action is conceivable without this sovereign  
affirmation of the future. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 115)

On the basis of constructive goals, the patients' suffering develops new positive, valuable meaning. There is an opportunity for patients to heal themselves, to assist in healing others (Beauvoir, 1947), and "develop a class consciousness." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 86)

For the mission in Beauvoirian Therapy to be established, once they have decided to choose freedom, survivors cannot simply fall into a static position, (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). It is necessary to make a conscious effort to join in cooperative action to strengthen the mission of bringing bullying to an end, as well as all other forms of oppression. "What must be done is to furnish [the oppressed] with the means of transcending [their] situation." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 86) It is by their mission that survivors fulfil themselves, by the visions at which they aim, they substantiate themselves (Beauvoir, 1947).



As result of having been oppressed, survivors can teach what they have learned from their situation to those who are struggling to understand such falsely harmonious and imbalanced conditions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The concern is not only conflict between individuals, but also the *war* that is created in defence of universal human rights (Beauvoir, 1947). It is not about the oppressed, it is about the oppressor's arrogance (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949), jealousy (Beauvoir, 1981), narcissism (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949) and will to control (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Regardless of the staggering dimensions of the world about us, the density of our ignorance, the risks of catastrophes to come, and our individual weakness within the immense collectivity, the fact remains that we are absolutely free today if we choose to will our existence in its finiteness, a finiteness which is open on the infinite. And in fact, any man who has known real loves, real revolts, real desires, and real will knows quite well that he has no need of any outside guarantee to be sure of his goals; their certitude comes from his own drive [...] Do what you must, come what may. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 159)

The source of uncertainty and risk in our actions is structured by the quality of freedom (Beauvoir, 1944; 1947), and as free beings, we bring meaning to the world. “[O]nly the subject defines the meaning of his action.” (Beauvoir, 1944, p. 114)

Table 21

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
<p>[I]n the face of the positivity of the future, the present is only the negative which must be eliminated as such (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Once you transcend the abusive situation, great things await you.</p>
<p>It is only when the moments of his life begin to be organized into behaviour that he can decide and choose (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Your life was <i>organized</i> through your depression and anxiety. You have now understood your newly found subjective position of choice.</p>
<p>Likewise there is a liberation of man only if, in aiming at itself, freedom is achieved absolutely in the very fact of aiming at itself (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>By facing your freedom and claiming it, you are exerting your subjectivity and liberty.</p>
<p>But when it is a question of choosing among freedoms, how shall we decide (Beauvoir, 1947)?</p>	<p>It is up to you to decide how to exert your freedom.</p>
<p>It appears to us that by turning toward this freedom we are going to discover a principle of action whose range will be universal (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Healing also claims the principle of conscious action, our natural right.</p>
<p>One finds himself back at the anguish</p>	

<p>of free decision. And that is why political choice is an ethical choice: it is a wager as well as a decision; one bets on the chances and risks of the measure under consideration; but whether chances and risks must be assumed or not in the given circumstances must be decided without help, and in so doing one sets up values (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>It is up to the individuals to consider difficult choices in moving forward with an ethical approach to their decisions, while understanding the need for social healing of the social condition and social justice. It will be difficult to speak out, to take a stand, to choose freedom. It is however the right thing to do.</p>
<p>If a door refuses to open, let us accept not opening it and there we are free (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Things may not be as you anticipate, but by choosing a different route, you remain free.</p>
<p>But whatever the joy of this liberation may be, it is not without great confusion (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Taking a stand is often met with varying hardship.</p>
<p>I believe that she has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as object; she is not the plaything of contradictory drives; she devises solutions of diverse values in the ethical scale (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>You are strong enough to make the moral, meaningful and transcendent choices.</p>

<p>An end is valid only by a return to the freedom which established it and which willed itself through this end (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Freedom is the clear and valid decision.</p>
<p>Choose authentically (Beauvoir, 1963).</p>	<p>... based on your principles and goals within the context of freedom.</p>
<p>A balance is reached if, on the whole, the cost does not seem too high to the man, and this depends, of course, on the strength of his desire and the importance he gives to what is to be sacrificed (Beauvoir, 1949).</p>	<p>Your rewards will outweigh your sacrifices.</p>

*Home Exercise*

It is time to consider choices and to make positive and meaningful decisions.

Man ought not entrust the care of his salvation to this uncertain and foreign future: it is up to him to assure it within his own existence; this existence is conceivable, as we have said, only as an affirmation of the future, but of a human future, a finite future. (Beauvoir, 1947, p.120)

By following the following flow-chart one can think about what each box represents to oneself.

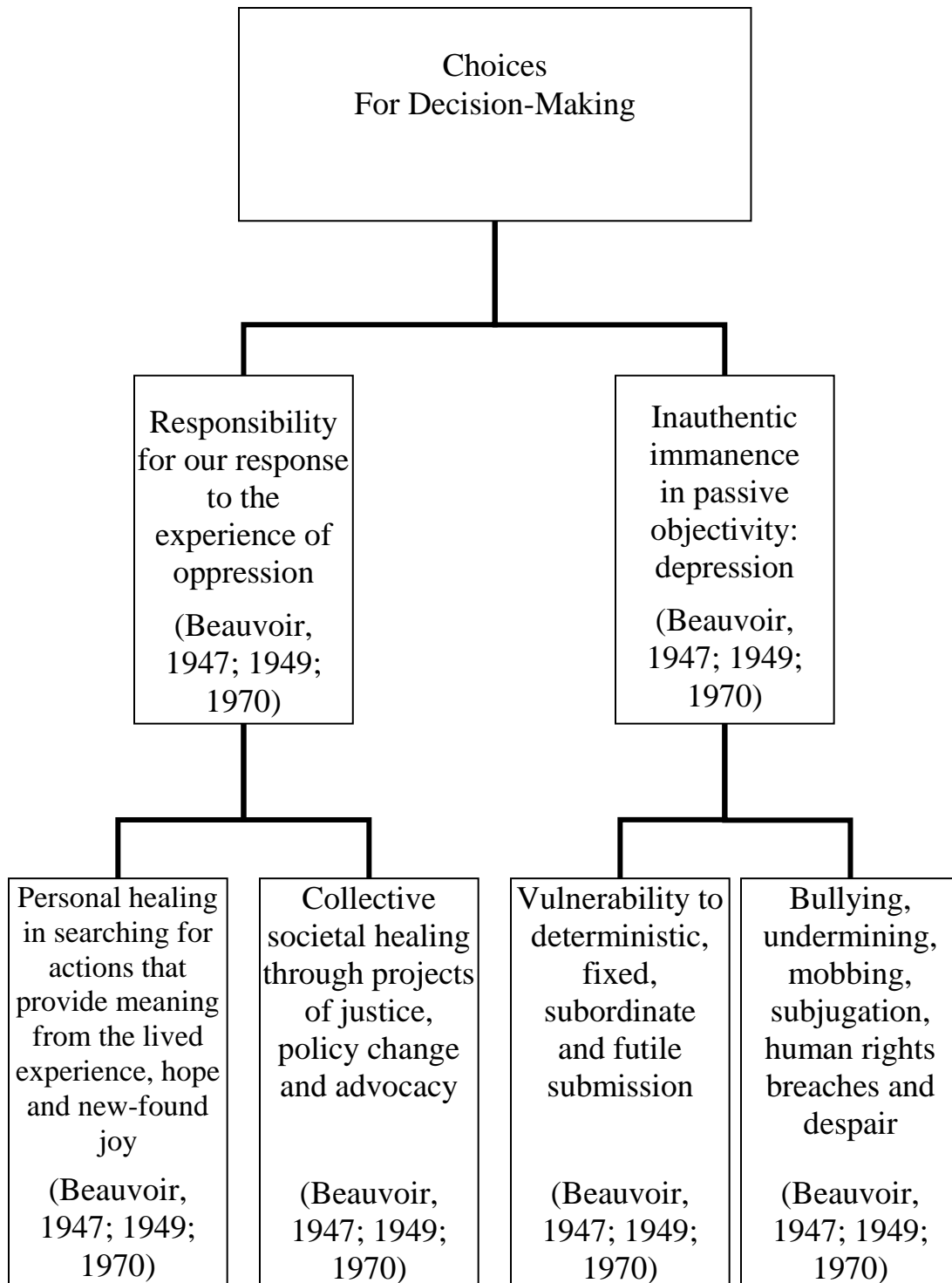


Figure 1

*Choices for Decision-Making*

## Chapter 10

### Intentionality

During the final and transcendent phase of Beauvoirian Therapy, we focus on the *power of intentionality*. We also focus on the fact that “every goal is at the same time a point of departure and that human freedom is the ultimate, the unique end to which [one] should destine [oneself].” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 49)

We must admit that there will be a recovery of the real and that all sacrifices will find their positive form within the absolute Mind. But this does not work without some difficulty. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 105)

This section further delineates Beauvoirian Therapy from other psychotherapeutic approaches. For Beauvoir, once one has chosen and reclaimed freedom, one must still embrace the following (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970):

1. Personal transcendence
2. Social responsibility
3. Political justice

Drawing on the quest for responsibility and justice for the patient as well as humanity, moving forward in these three areas may take collaboration with various agencies and like-minded groups of individuals (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). “[T]he constructive activities of man take on a valid meaning only when they are assumed as a movement toward freedom.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 80) It is when people with good intentions band together in positive movement that equality, individuality and overall healing can occur, as can a joyful and meaningful existence (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

From the Beauvoirian perspective, the subject of intentionality should be approached with an open understanding that this is how to *heal* continually. To achieve a healing process, each individual, however immersed in the ‘culture of permissiveness and silence’, is required to critically analyze the harmful social constructs, and to take choices into account. “What will he [or she] do in the face of this new situation? This is the moment when he [or she] decides.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 39) This is the moment of conscious action.

A vital aspect in achieving transcendence consists of making oppression a deconstructed and recognizable ethical issue and moving the topic ahead in the *political* realm (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). The issue of oppression is a primary ethical concern (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 22

*Education as a Form of Intervention*

<p>Edifying Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal transcendence begins with acquiring conscious awareness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).</li><li>• Although the Beauvoirian approach is one of conscious action, in certain instances the choice of provisional inaction is, in fact, action.</li><li>• You must continually claim freedom by not allowing anyone else to bully or mob you (Beauvoir, 1947).</li><li>• In Beauvoirian Therapy, there is a vital component of social responsibility through advocacy and educational programs (Beauvoir, 1947). There needs to be a pivotal change in the permissiveness and complacency in society as a whole (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).</li><li>• In view of justice and change, Beauvoirian Therapy suggests that, if possible, one should do one's part in disseminating policy guidelines in whichever capacity possible.</li><li>• One should be involved in community activity or workplace health and safety and compile evidence-based documentation to move forward with policy recommendations for better adherence and compliance.</li><li>• A simple individual revolt is no longer enough (Beauvoir, 1947). We must transcend the abuse collectively (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970).</li><li>• Keep learning about psychological abuse and bullying policies. Political action is necessary for the implementation of change (Beauvoir, 1947;</li></ul>
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1949; 1970).

- One must always remember, teach and ensure that oppression is understood as a human rights violation (Beauvoir, 1947) and a criminal action that needs to be treated as such (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Table 23

*The Patient's Voice*

Inductively Derived Question Segment
What does the term <i>moral obligation</i> mean to you?
How would you like to help society understand the prevalence of bullying?
How will you use the responsibility that comes with freedom?
What if you notice that an individual or a group of persons are being oppressed and do not realize their <i>servitude</i> , or their imposed subordinate situation?
How do you feel about the statement: 'Not doing anything about oppression is just as bad as participating in it?'
How do you feel about bullying?
How do you think you will find empowerment and courage to face potential backlash such as further misrepresentations, or being called a 'trouble-maker?'
What does knowing that hope is relevant in all conditions mean to you?
With any activity, both failure and/or success are not predictable. Do you have the

courage to care? If so, please explain what it means to you.
But is it enough to change policies, laws and the whole social context?
Would you like to explain anything further before we move to Beauvoirian principles?

*Beauvoirian Principles*

Beauvoir is very clear: life is in constant movement and progressive activity heals depression (Beauvoir, 1949). One must deny the destructive direction of others and carry out responsible, meaningful will (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). Oppression is not a necessary conclusion to any condition (Beauvoir, 1970). To ensure a route to happiness, one must take on progressive and essential universally beneficial projects (Beauvoir, 1947) because the absence of goals can obscure meaningful existence (Beauvoir, 1949).

We are all interconnected. It is therefore important to be aware of our relation to others, within the context of *life givens* that confront us, as well as choices that arise in varying conditions (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). As we work through our situations, the decisions based on our choices are what delineate authenticity from inauthenticity and what help us construct and reconstruct ourselves (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

A revolt and *reconstruction* oneself as subject is not enough because it is absolutely necessary to deny any *validity* of abusive systems (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

In particular those who are condemned to stagnation are often pronounced happy on the pretext that happiness consists in being at rest. This notion we reject, for our perspective is that of existential ethics. Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties. There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 28)

What is necessary is social and political reform (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) in cooperative action (Beauvoir, 1949). The subject must also advocate for, and educate, socially at-risk populations as well as those in positions to alter policy (Beauvoir, 1949).

It is here that the Stoic distinction between “things which do not depend upon us” and those which “depend upon us” proves to be insufficient: for “we” is legion and not an individual; each one depends upon others, and what happens to me by means of others depends upon me as regards its meaning. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82)

By banding together as advocates for positive change, subjects demand and receive better outcomes for themselves and others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

## Power of Intentionality

In order to achieve moral freedom, one must accept and advocate one's freedom as well as the freedom of others.

We have to respect freedom only when it is intended for freedom, not when it strays, flees itself, and resigns itself.

A freedom which is interested only in denying freedom must be denied. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 49)

One must promote a concrete culture of freedom whereby one actively condemns inauthenticity and works purposefully to enable transcendent subjectivities to project meaningful endeavors in the future. Those who project themselves toward progressive endeavors and defend freedom will find peace of mind and hope (Beauvoir, 1947).

Beauvoir calls for personal and societal *confrontation* of the issue of oppression (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). If the constraints are not called into question the catastrophic conditions will undoubtedly continue (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Each society creates its own set of permissible values and it is in the social context that oppression finds its definition. To be socially responsible is to insist that oppression be discontinued. This requires an upheaval and a collective uprising in support of individuals and groups (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970) from a social and legal perspective (Beauvoir, 1947).

Once freedom is attained, it is not to dissipate, to be unleashed carelessly or to be consumed without aiming at a productive goal (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). As it unfolds in the world, it will affect others as it is a *speaking* world from which human rights and appeals rise up (Beauvoir, 1947). This means that, through this world,

everyone can give their experiences a concrete content, meaning and message (Beauvoir, 1947).

[Certain individuals] have found themselves the authors of positive works; their revolt has become the matter on which their career has been built. Finally, some of them, in a genuine return to the positive, have been able to realize their freedom; they have given it a content without disavowing it. They have engaged themselves, without losing themselves, in political action, in intellectual or artistic research, in family or social life (Beauvoir, 1947, Ch.2, p.8).

There is only one solution for emotional, physical and societal healing: to revolt and fight for natural and universal human rights. It is in rising up against the multi-layered cover-up that survivors can find resilience (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). With continual education (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970) and awareness of legal systems, survivors of oppression can draw on their desire to help and *heal* the societal condition. With a collective uprising, the future is open to the possibility of freedom within the celebration of difference, egalitarianism and autonomy (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

It is through social and political avenues that one's freedom transcends and passes beyond to the infinite (Beauvoir, 1947). Lawful intervention may be necessary as an objective entity with *universal* principles (Beauvoir, 1947).

Table 24

*Prompted Discussion*

Explorative Quotation	Inductive Inference
<p>Freedom is then revealed and he must decide upon his attitude in the face of it (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Once the choices are clear, survivors need to face their decisions with courage and empowerment.</p>
<p>I rediscovered my own autonomy... pen in hand, with a sort of terror I went through the experience (Beauvoir, 1960).</p>	<p>Your documentation is what will be your defense in the pursuing social justice as well as political justice. Your writings will assist you in your quest for transcendent freedom.</p>
<p>[The survivor] has interests to defend; he alone is “competent” to decide upon his hopes and his trust (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>You are the one to decide how you want to proceed, should you move forward legally.</p>
<p>But the present is not a potential past; it is the moment of choice and action; we can not avoid living it through a project; and there is no project which is purely contemplative since one always projects himself toward something, toward the future; to put oneself “outside” is still a way of</p>	<p>In Beauvoirian Therapy one embarks on projects of personal, social and political change. This combination is needed to celebrate difference and egalitarianism as well as ensure better outcomes.</p>

<p>living the inescapable fact that one is inside (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	
<p>[T]he quantity that will profit by their sacrifice is infinitely greater [...] (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Survivors should find further contentment in knowing that many will be positively and infinitely affected by their intentional actions.</p>
<p>[T]he oppressed are metamorphosed into a blind force (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>You can do so much personally and collectively. The possibilities are endless for positive outcomes.</p>
<p>Writing guaranteed my moral autonomy; in the solitude of risks taken, of decisions to be made, I made my freedom much more real than by accommodating myself to any money-making practice. For me, my books were a real fulfillment, and as such they freed me from the necessity to affirm myself in any other way (Beauvoir, 1963).</p>	<p>Literature is such a vital component in Beauvoirian Therapy, for a multitude of reasons.</p>
<p>In any event, it is evident that we are not going to decide to fulfill the will of every man. There are cases where a man positively wants evil, that is, the</p>	<p>You will go up against those who want to continue evil deeds. Know this, and be prepared for their challenges.</p>

<p>enslavement of other men, and he must then be fought (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	
<p>By the fact of transcending himself he indicates certain goals, he circumscribes certain values (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>You are moving in a positive direction with the truth.</p>
<p>[The Survivor] must regard his undertakings as finite and will them absolutely (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>Focus continually on your quest for freedom and live in that movement.</p>
<p>[O]nly by dedicating [yourself] to this positivity can the negative henceforth return to the positive (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>If you have a constructive mission, your pain can turn into hope for positive possibilities.</p>
<p>If it came to be that each man did what he must, existence would be saved in each one without there being any need of dreaming of a paradise (Beauvoir, 1947).</p>	<p>... You can do your part.</p>



## Table 25

### Home Exercise

Move Forward... Be *Aware!* And create a meaningful life.

Throughout treatment, you have been asked to identify oppression, chronicle pertinent facts and write your story. This served two main purposes:

1) to help you therapeutically within our *counselling* sessions

2) should you feel that the breaches against you have been so damaging that you feel the need for justice, you will have your supporting documentation to move a human rights violation claim forward legally

Remember:

-Speak out and inform authorities (Beauvoir, 1949).

-Keep the facts that have been confirmed by others concealed as you may need to draw on them for their support in legal action.

-Oppression is a universal human rights violation and should be pursued with as much support as possible (Beauvoir, 1947).

Final notes:

-We live among others who choose to hinder or facilitate others' freedom.

-We create meaning in our lives by choosing how we use our own freedom.

-Values in the world are established by how we choose, act and interact.

-It is up to you to discover, cultivate and reveal your life missions.

## Conclusion

Beauvoirian Therapy presents therapeutic vision and conceptualizes the concept of freedom in a unique way. It contrasts with the Psychoanalytic and CBT idea that our awareness, cognition and behaviour are determined. As well, it moves past the humanistic and existential models of freedom, which do not directly address the derivation of oppressive issues. Beauvoirian Therapy assists in the demystification of socially constructed and deterministic *asymmetrical* ideologies and outlines therapeutic sessions in addition to a call for subjective action. Beauvoirian Therapy points toward finding and demanding mutually respectful and symmetrical conditions where individuals meet and equally exert their free will to make autonomous decisions based on their own choices.

In Beauvoirian Therapy, the individual comes to understand that oppressors are cowards who find their self-worth by devaluing others, rather than by improving themselves (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). They conceal their imperfections and jealousy in their conceit (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949). The desire for power is ultimately defeatist: to discriminate, bully and/or mob implies an understanding of the significance of Others' strengths and humanity. Unknowingly, oppressors reveal their *impotence* (Beauvoir, 1947). By feeling the need to *elevate* themselves, they go against another's natural human condition and rights. Oppressors devalue and negate Others' positive attributes (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Oppressors project unacceptable values onto their victims and orchestrate mystifications intended to persuade society that their actions are warranted and their imposed hierarchies justified. The oppressors, with a view to exert power, together or in a group, aim to objectify, dominate and reject parity and thus constantly strategize (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

The urge to oppress others is at least in part a result of treating the ‘other’ as though he or she is only a material thing, rather than a free and thinking human being. [... Beauvoir] emphasizes that we must recognize the dual nature of the human condition not only in ourselves, but also in those we perceive as other. This idea provides the vantage for de Beauvoir’s views on freedom. (Moore, 2008, p. 14)

Ambiguity provides us with the conscious awareness that life is “lived in both heartbreak and joy.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 30) At times ambiguity, and consequently freedom, produces tension, responsibility, risk, doubt, and therefore anxiety, it nevertheless establishes liberating conditions of choice, action and hope. As a result, in an *indefinite movement* we can transcend socially constructed situations, and create our own meaningful endeavors and life purposes, and ultimately develop our unique individuality.

[M]an must accept the tension of the struggle, that his liberation must actively seek to perpetuate itself,

without aiming at an impossible state of equilibrium and rest; this does not mean that he ought to prefer the sleep of slavery to this incessant conquest. Whatever the problem raised for him, the setbacks that he will have to assume, and the difficulties with which he will have to struggle, he must reject oppression at any cost. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 96)

For oppressed persons, past abuse becomes a lived experience (Beauvoir, 1949; 1970). The psychological ability to transcend in a world of individuality and equality begins with the ethical code of justice (Beauvoir, 1947). To liberate oneself is also to liberate the freedom of others (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Individuals can turn their lived experience into an incentive to take personal and societal action: they may claim their subjectivity and the responsibility to illuminate the problem of bullying by categorically denouncing all forms of oppression (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

For Beauvoir, the power of intentionality is directly linked to consciousness (Beauvoir, 1947). The awareness of socially constructed, permitted, silenced and hidden abuses guides victims from depressive symptoms to enlightenment, whereby they can claim subjectivity. In deciding to reconstruct themselves as subjects, survivors maintain authenticity through ethical and responsible goals (Beauvoir, 1947).

Conscious awareness is the learning process that provides the shift from oppression to depression. It allows depression to transform into an active yet *positive* anxiety that, in turn, prompts a forward movement of revolt against such deplorable conditions. What may seem ostensibly dysfunctional is the active, ambiguous path to freedom.

In Beauvoirian Therapy, to assist victimized individuals in reclaiming freedom is to help them achieve the joy of existence. Having been objectified, individuals reconstruct and *reinvent* themselves with their *willed* subjectivity (Beauvoir, 1947). No longer segregated and depressed, survivors can finally feel happiness (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Happiness comes from dealing with a critical understanding of reality and with the uncovering of possibilities for positive transformation (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Survivors have been *cured* from their diseased oppressive condition and must continually assert the cure: continuously choosing their course of action (Beauvoir, 1947). Beauvoirian Therapy promotes the practice of freedom.

Once the Beauvoirian patient presents for treatment, they are met with no preconceived notions, just support and compassion. They learn the invaluable meaning and purpose of conscious awareness and how it will be the turning point on the road to freedom. The patient then learns about oppression and its implications before delving into his or her own traumatic abusive experience. Throughout, much like Beauvoir herself, the patient is asked to engage in various types of literature and documentation to *disseminate the truth* (Beauvoir, 1972), and only on this basis can hope and transcendence truly exist (Beauvoir, 1972). This encourages patients to come forward with their lived experience.

During the phase in which the patients discuss their trauma, they are supported in *purging* all of the abuse they endured. The exploration in the therapy sessions ultimately leads the patient to realize that the depression they experienced was a reaction to an unhealthy societal condition. Depression is their gift of protest. Anxiety is their gift of active energy to feel the desire for change. Once patients decide to choose their new, subjective role, they can start moving forward personally and collectively.

The final steps in Beauvoirian Therapy are to ensure that the patient is aware that joy and freedom must be affirmed at every instant (Beauvoir, 1947). There must also be a constant balance between one's goals and the means of achieving them (Beauvoir, 1947). This balanced and positive transcendence can lead to infinite possibilities as survivors help others by educating and advocating social and political change (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970).

Life is occupied in both perpetuating itself and surpassing itself; if all it does is maintain itself, then living is only not dying, and human existence is indistinguishable from an absurd vegetation; a life justifies itself only if its effort to perpetuate itself is integrated into its surpassing and if this surpassing has no other limits than those which the subject assigns himself. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 82)

Beauvoirian Therapy helps people grasp and surpass the personal and social aspects of oppression and its metaphysical causes, for it is the diseased social conditions that contribute to psychological and existential anxiety. To this end, Beauvoirian therapists assist in demystifying the social construction of oppressive conditions, and in exploring the difficulties of lived experience. They also offer a number of penetrating insights about the victims' deplorable conditions along with options for healing both the individual and society (Beauvoir, 1947; 1949; 1970). Every individual has an equal claim to metaphysical freedom (Beauvoir, 1947).

Beauvoirian Therapy elucidates how to improve social and psychological outcomes through Beauvoirian ethics. This therapeutic treatment plan goes beyond

individualistic care toward a more comprehensive approach to understand causal effects and discover one's inner capacity to heal depression as well as the health-harming oppressive conditions. "[T]hrough time and space, the triumph of the cause embraces the infinite, it interests the whole collectivity." (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 100)

Beauvoirian Therapy encourages individuals to stand up to oppression in an effective method with meaningfulness, optimism and hope.

[W]e must end by abolishing all suppression; each one must carry on his struggle in connection with that of the other and by integrating it into the general pattern. What order should be followed? What tactics should be adopted? It is a matter of opportunity and efficiency. For each one it also depends upon his individual situation. It is possible that he may be led to sacrifice temporarily a cause whose success is subordinate to that of a cause whose defense is more urgent; on the other hand, it is possible that one may judge it necessary to maintain the tension of revolt against a situation to which one does not wish to consent at any price. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 89)

A psychotherapeutic approach based on ambiguity, the human condition and natural given right is one which focuses on interconnected humans treating each other with respect and dignity, and forging laws valid for all (Beauvoir, 1947).

Existence asserts itself as an absolute which must seek its justification within itself and not suppress itself, even though it may be lost by preserving itself. To attain his truth, man must not attempt to dispel the ambiguity of his being but, on the contrary, accept the task of realizing it. (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 13)

Within the psychotherapeutic sessions, Beauvoirian Therapists empower and encourage their patients to embrace and celebrate what makes them unique and puts them on a level plane. It is important to denounce and *speak out* against negatively-impacting oppression. Beauvoirian Therapy is the “triumph of freedom over facticity.” (Beauvoir, 1947, p. 96)

In Beauvoirian Therapy, to heal from oppression three main elements need to occur. Beauvoir’s solution is clear: Firstly, individuals must heal internally by psychologically revolting against the abuse, and by making the decision to choose subjectivity. In their subjective role, survivors must move forward psychologically and socially. Secondly, society must heal collectively by taking responsibility and actively revolting against the complacent and permissive structures that permit abusive and violating ideologies, disparagement and brutality. Finally, political and legal policies must be reinforced via legal action to preserve individuals’ universal human rights.



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