

DE BEAUVOIR'S NOTION OF FREEDOM IN ENHANCEMENT OF THE DIGNITY OF THE GIRL CHILD TODAY

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Abstract: Freedom is a concept frequently used in our daily lives as we interact with one another in society. Everyone wants to be free. We realize that it is a concept that is not clearly understood by many people causing misunderstandings among people. It is an existential problem that continues to persist. It is a topic that philosophers such as Simone De Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have addressed. De Beauvoir is an existential philosopher who has extensively dealt with freedom in her works. It is impossible to discuss freedom while ignoring the problem of human dignity. It is also noted that certain circumstances undermine the girl child's dignity as she attempts to define and find purpose in her life, making her appear unauthentic. Therefore, our main concern in this article is to show how De Beauvoir understood dignity. Then using her views on freedom, we elucidate how it enhances the dignity of the girl child today. The article expresses why the girl child and not boy child by using the example of the Maasai community in Kenya. Lastly, the researchers give some objections and conclude the findings.

Keywords: De Beauvoir, Freedom, Enhancement, Dignity, Girl Child, Today

1.0 Introduction

We must analyze De Beauvoir's concept of freedom and how it promotes the dignity of the girl child today. We first define her conception of human dignity, for we realize that an unclear understanding of human dignity hampers the dignity of the girl child; taking an example of the Maasai community in Kenya. Therefore, we are interested in views of De Beauvoir's notion of freedom and how they enhance the dignity of the girl child today. Lastly, we highlight some of the objections towards De Beauvoir's notion of dignity and then a conclusion.

1.1 De Beauvoir's Views on Dignity

According to De Beauvoir, human rights are not important like human dignity, because, they are more theoretical than reality. In practical terms, it is hard to find certain rights, such as freedom from torture, the right to a fair trial before murder, the right to a minimum education, and the right to vote. This is because they are fundamental to human dignity. If these are not one's initial rights, then obtaining them is a significant benefit. However, having them is not enough to live a decent life in fact, it is not even a sufficient chance to live a decent life. More is offered in this sense by the more nuanced concept of dignity. Someone who can feel her worth as a person and whose worth is recognized by others either satisfies the requirements for leading a good life or is very close to doing so. However, compared to assuming rights, the cost of making dignity a fundamental normative concept is larger when evaluated in terms of philosophical contestation.¹

She did believe that lack of human dignity would lead to unbiassed refutation experienced by most people if not all, then women.²According to her, one's dignity depends on the way a person is viewed by others and on how she or

¹ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir* edited by Emily Grosholz, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2004), 92.

² Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 90.

he relates to the physical and mental realms. Considering that is how one treats others, in the worlds of matter and thought. She firmly believed whatever that made people feel respected by society especially women would increase their intrinsic worth. Moreover, she thought that what was industrious and inspiring should be thoroughly trained and practical. All these were a result of them being intrinsically valuable to peoples' lives. They do offer the person chances of transcending or excelling beyond the ordinary things thus transforming oneself and the society from the experiences encountered.³

1.1.1 Human Dignity and Social Dignity

De Beauvoir was convinced that one way to gauge the social standing of men and women in a given setting is to consider who determines the composition of the income, the freedom one has to go and come in freely in the family, how are corrections administered in case a mistake is done, how is one severely punished, who suffers more deadly misfortune during early stages, who is raised well, and who comes into contact with filth and rubbish.⁴ For example, it is noticed that some men spend a lot of money and time on personal matters and services as compared to their women counterparts. Women, on the other hand, utilize their money and resources to care for the children and household, especially in developing countries. It is also observed that women spend most of their time performing manual and domestic work at home such as cleaning, cooking, and attending to children, whether learned or not. Women's work tends to be dictated by men, who supervise and control them.⁵

Out of necessity, women choose works that require little or no education. It is acclaimed that the social dignity of women is lower as compared to men, because of being more confined to homes and not much exposed to the outside world as men are. Therefore, freedom as a value should help the girl child to seek managerial power, win prize awards, to control some section of world wealth in the society. Few women feature in history in comparison to their male counterparts due to constraints on personal freedom.⁶ Human dignity is more inherent when likened to moral dignity. People by their nature as human beings possess human dignity regardless of who they are, or the kind of status they find themselves.⁷

In addition, for De Beauvoir, the low status of women is not a result of them being lazy. The intense manual work they involve themselves in is taken for granted across cultures around the world. They are more involved in agricultural work compared to their male counterparts who do most of the supervision. That is, women do most dull and tiring work which requires little education and thus little financial earnings. The few who are lucky to get paying jobs are paid less than the amount paid to men.⁸

This is something that starts early in the process of their upbringing whereby some parents treat boys special as compared to girls. Generally, women have objectively low status not only in places where traditional rules are the order of the day and poor, where they are termed as people with no better knowledge of things.⁹ Basically, De Beauvoir's notion of dignity is more of social dignity that reflects objective values something that is more than rights that are acknowledged and fixed.¹⁰

Moreover, dignity for De Beauvoir is an interpersonal concept, whereby it has to be owned and acknowledged by some groups such as women. The concept is comprehended differently by people, thus misunderstandings due to lack of conformity.¹¹ The low status of women's participation in world development is a result of the cultural practices that they both belong to and do not belong to. It is rather the world constructed by men.¹²

³ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 91.

⁴ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 92.

⁵ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 92-93.

⁶ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 93.

⁷ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 94.

⁸ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 93.

⁹ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 94.

¹⁰ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 99.

¹¹ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 100.

¹² Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 101.

She believed that work is an essential form of dignity where women participate more than men, especially in the agriculture sector in the rural areas, hence boosting their social dignity. Even though hard work in agriculture reduces women's condition to those of beasts, still their social dignity is enhanced because of what they contribute to society.¹³ In addition, she noted that some relevant instruments that aid in the development of social awareness realities had been kept for men and denied to women. Such tools included; modern test center apparatus, artistic musicians' resources, filmmaking equipment, the academic gears attained through progressive teaching, and the devices of influence given by the management of news organizations and other outlets. In reality, such tools should be meant for social prestige and not human dignity.¹⁴

1.1.2 Work and the Human Dignity

De Beauvoir insisted that dignity is tangled in the act of waged work which appears simple in light of successive encounters. This is where women find the role of the worker exposing them to new misunderstandings and insults. They too are disoriented from the already brain-work fondness greater than any additional arrangements. It is beneficial that women can earn dignity through intellectual labor. However, it is enjoyed by a few numbers. She questions whether there is a credible theory of emancipation behind the matters that are observed.¹⁵

Dignity, according to De Beauvoir, is a relational concept because she thought that the same behaviors that made women the center of attention in society would also give their lives objective value. Intensive practice and application are necessary for creative and productive endeavors. She believed that the reason they were valuable was not just that they were customarily associated with men, but also that women were either discouraged or prohibited from participating in them. However, their inherent worth stemmed from the potential they provided to surpass conventional norms. Participating in them allows one to express and sense their independence via the material resistance of the work they have done. Specifically, the potential to change it to suit human desires. A person's dignity is enhanced when they feel valued by others, and a better life is contingent upon this, as it cannot be fully attained when one's dignity is compromised.¹⁶

The challenge encountered by the girl child consists of being denied to be involved in some matters or some things. She continues in a fruitless search for her true being through self-admiration, love, or religion. Her endeavors tangibly validate her status as a subject; about the goals she pursues, with the money and rights she seizes, she makes trials of and senses her responsibility. When she is creative and active, she regains her transcendence.¹⁷

However, a sizable portion of well-off women find that their careers provide them with social and financial independence. These are thought of when one contemplates the prospects of women.¹⁸ A woman who has attained economic independence from a male is not the same as him in terms of morals, society, or psychology. Her career and passion are executed inside a framework provided by her complete life pattern. She does not have the same history behind her that a boy does, nor is she regarded equally by society because the world sees her differently when she enters adulthood.¹⁹

1.2 Factors that Affect the Girl Child's Dignity

As the girl child tries to define and find meaning in her life wherever she is, there are several factors she encounters that hamper her dignity and hence, not able to be authentic. Some of these factors include gender roles, education, negative cultural practices such as teen marriage, bullying and curtailment, domestic violence, oppression, and myths among others. We now shift to show how some of these factors affect the girl child's dignity in the context of the Maasai girl.

¹³ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 106.

¹⁴ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 106-107.

¹⁵ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 91.

¹⁶ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 92.

¹⁷ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Translated and edited by H. M. Parshley (London: Great Britain, 1953), 641.

¹⁸ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 642-643.

¹⁹ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 643.

1.2.1 Gender Roles

Gender roles refer to the positions that men and women perform in society on the social, moral, and political fronts.²⁰ Socially, the majority of the girls participate in farm and domestic chores that do not provide a higher income. This is where the girls are confined to the first gender rule that one is identified as either male or female and has to perform works concerning their identity.²¹ When the girls are to carry out masculinity, they have to balance with femininity. The ideology that women are weak therefore they are not able to perform tough jobs as perceived by society, is unreliable because people are talented differently. It is how one is nurtured and the level of exposure that contributes a lot to the extent to which a person can perform. Gender role makes people to some extent not live out their potential fully, because of the false ideologies indoctrinated in them. If someone does not have the freedom and the knowledge to challenge those beliefs, she ends up living an illusion and not authentic life.

1.2.2 Low Level of Education

Formal or informal education is crucial to every human person. It is observed that some families, religions, and communities do not avail formal educational opportunities to girls as it is for boys. For example, in the Maasai of Kenya, a girl is seen as a passerby thus educating her is not mandatory. She is to learn the informal education, and once she reaches adolescence or the age of eight years, she is to be circumcised to be a woman. For them proceeding with education to a higher level is not a value as such.²² Once circumcised the girl should marry to serve the husband and produce children. This culture is more practiced by the nuclear families where a girl is more confined in the family and not exposed.²³

The access to education is poor for many Maasai girls, leading to low levels of knowledge and skills. The men believe little in formal education as an acquisition of knowledge to deepen the understanding of the girls to get to know the truth. Education is to assist one to be critical, and analytic, and improve their thinking and reasoning capacity. To equip oneself as a way of enabling them to handle especially the moral and ethical issues in our world today.²⁴

To have any meaningful impact on general practice, the truth needs to be universally accepted. Otherwise, it will be ineffective. If a woman does not know why she is being asked to cooperate, it becomes difficult for her to be moral. She nevertheless understands her responsibility and perceives things as they relate to her real world unless freedom impairs her ability to reason. Parents must model patriotism for their children. A disciplined cultivation of virtues is based on love for humanity, and love can only arise from consideration of humanity's moral and civic values. But occasionally women's situations and educational backgrounds prohibit them from taking part in these kinds of studies.²⁵

1.2.3 Forced and Early Marriages

Majority of the traditional societies see marriage as the destiny of a woman. Since marriage is a social construct, some females marry young, some get married to men they did not choose, and some plan or suffer because they are

²⁰ Ninar Rosenstand, *The Human Condition* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc, 2002), 172.

²¹ Ninar Rosenstand, *The Human Condition*, 171-172.

²² Ezekiel Ole Katato, Education of Maasai Girls in Kenya. <https://www.standup4talent.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Background-Education-Maasai-Girls.pdf>. Accessed on 4/4/2024 at 09:58 am.

²³ Masago et al. "Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Welfare of the Maasai Girl Child in Narok County, Kenya." *European Journal of Social Sciences*. September - December 2020 Volume 4, Issue 3. <https://intapi.sciendo.com/pdf/10.26417/420igx43v>. Accessed on 28/03/2024 at 7:22 am.

²⁴ Fides Zakayo & Chrispina Lekule, (2022). "Factors Hindering Maasai Girls Transition from Secondary to Higher Education: A Case of Monduli District in Arusha –Tanzania." *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 6(2), 119 – 130. <https://jriiejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/JRIIE-6-2-014.pdf>. Accessed on 4/4/2024 at 10:25 am.

²⁵ Oxford World's Classic, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Women, A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 67.

single. Whether a woman is dissatisfied, disobedient, or neutral toward marriage, she must be described and explained in terms of that institution.²⁶

Working for the group validates a man's reality as a socially independent and full individual. In many respects, he is seen as a producer. However, a woman's only options are domestic and reproductive labor, which is beneath her dignity.²⁷ Her marriage appears to be her only source of support and validation for her existence. Although something bequeathed or inherited by a woman may appear to give her legal independence, these things bind her to the family.²⁸

While a woman is belittled by society for trying to be unfaithful, at times man is thought to be free to do everything, even concubine, without consequence. Women who have been wronged are less likely to return to their families or to file for divorce or self-separation.²⁹ This kind of practice does not promote the dignity of the girl child, because she cannot express her freedom, make decisions, and choices freely of her life. At other times because of the early age girls are married, some of them develop health complications such as fistula because of tender muscles, pre-term births, and death at childbirth due to over bleeding. Others are socially and psychologically affected by losing their babies because they do not know how to care for them, dropping out of schools and the increased number of pregnancies, thus low self-esteem.³⁰

1.2.4 Critique of Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting

In the Maasai tribe, female genital mutilation or cutting is a traditional practice that still happens often, putting girls especially those from that tribe in grave danger. All these are a result of the patriarchal cultural practices where man is the head of the family. The woman has no say in the society. A girl once eight years or reaches adolescence is seen as a source of wealth to her family because she can be married at any time to a man of nineteen years and above. The Maasai girl has no ownership in her family, she is like a stranger who is to leave at any time. She has to undergo a female cut as a way of preparing her for marriage. Those who are not cut are seen as useless in the community, people who do not deserve dignity. Important sexual education is not discussed in public such as menstruation thus the girls remain innocent. She has to sort herself using the means she finds relevant.³¹

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Child Marriage among the Rendille, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu, and Somali Communities in Kenya, is a 2017 UNICEF report that defines female genital cutting as any procedure that involves partial or total removal of or injury to the external female genitalia performed for non-therapeutic reasons. The report classifies female genital cutting into four categories: prepuce (clitoridectomy) and partial or complete clitoris removal. There are two variations of this type: removing the prepuce or clitoral hood alone and removing the clitoris along with the prepuce. Second, the clitoris and labia minora may be removed entirely or partially, and the labia majora may or may not be excised. This type can be accomplished in three ways: by removing the labia minora alone, by removing the clitoris and the labia minora, or by removing the clitoris, the labia minora, and the labia majora, either partially or fully. Third, the clitoris may or may not be removed in conjunction with the repositioning and cutting of the labia majora and/or minora to restrict the vaginal entrance. This type is performed by either removing and arranging the labia minora or by arranging the labia majora. The final category is unclassified, which includes any additional damaging non-medical treatments including cauterization, piercing, pricking, incising, and scraping that is done on the female genitalia. All these practices performed on the girls sometimes have some

²⁶ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 415.

²⁷ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 415.

²⁸ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 416.

²⁹ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 417.

³⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nairobi, 2017, *Baseline Study Report: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting and Child Marriage among the Rendille, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu and Somali Communities in Kenya* (Nairobi: UNICEF, 2017), 98. <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/531/file/Kenya-0000074.pdf.pdf>. Accessed on 28/03/2024 at 9:24 am.

³¹ Fides Zakayo & Chrispina Lekule, (2022). "Factors Hindering Maasai Girls Transition from Secondary to Higher Education: A Case of Monduli District in Arusha –Tanzania." *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 6(2), 119 – 130. <https://jriiejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/JRIIE-6-2-014.pdf>. Accessed on 4/4/2024 at 10:25 am.

adverse side effects afterward such as high maternal deaths, infections, and adverse obstetric including cesarean and post-partum hemorrhage.³²

At times the girls who are not cut are stigmatized in the community by being mocked, isolated, not helped during childbirth, refusing to eat their food when they cook, not allowed to milk cows, and being considered as young children.³³ The social doctrine of the Catholic teaching warns us that all the activities performed to a person should aim at promoting the dignity of that person. Therefore, it is a challenge not only for the Maasai people but to all people who practice the cultures that diminish the girl child's dignity to check on them.³⁴

1.2.5 Oppression as a Hindrance to the Dignity of the Girl Child

Oppression is a concept used to describe how a person is treated in society by fellow human persons as they encounter and interact with each other. It is the injustice a person exercises over the other that violates his or her rights and values rendering one being less human thus conflicting with the person's dignity.

The issue of marriage should not be the basis of defining a person, because whether married or unmarried is not important in one's life. A person who wishes to marry let him marry and if she or he does not marry is not a sin as described by St. Paul in the holy scriptures.³⁵ After all it is a personal decision, and no one will live another person's life. The most important thing to note is whether the person is fulfilled or not by the decision made. People need to live an authentic life, a life that is not based on other people's decisions, opinions, beliefs, or desires. Once people learn to be authentic, they will be responsible for whatever the consequences of what they have decided. Many questions will be answered and doubts reduced. Shifting blame minimized, the many difficulties will be taken positively and solutions will be sought in the right possible way. Alternatives will be realized, checked, and actualized.

Once there is freedom, people will be marrying not as a way to be recognized or valued by society, but as a free choice of what they are convinced of as the right thing of their knowledge and understanding. No one will be blamed for not marrying or marrying. Marriage will also not be based on tribal or ethnic, regional like African, Asian, or European, nation, status, or faith religious convictions whether Christian, Islamic, or Hinduism, and cultural practices such as female cut, or male circumcision. This will be a way of enhancing human dignity because one treats the other person as a human being made to resemble and reflect the divine, the infinite being with all powers, with intrinsic values that no contingent being can create. This will also help in the understanding of one's choice to marry or not. It is not a way of running away from societal expectations nor a way of fulfilling what is prescribed by society. But rather the mutual union of two opposite sexes to live together as husband and wife helping each other.

The person will be valued as a person, and not as a robot to do everything for the opposite gender, not to be a parasite or a reliability waiting to be provided with everything. People will learn to take the initiative to do things and at the same time be given the chance to initiate things. People will be acknowledged for who they are and for what they do. We now turn to show how De Beauvoir's concept of freedom can enhance the dignity of the girl child.

1.3.1 Freedom as a Two-way Traffic for the Realization of Dignity

³² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nairobi, 2017, *Baseline Study Report: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting and Child Marriage among the Rendille, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu and Somali Communities in Kenya* (Nairobi: UNICEF, 2017), 98. <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/531/file/Kenya-0000074.pdf.pdf>. Accessed on 28/03/2024 at 9:24 am.

³³ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nairobi, 2017, *Baseline Study Report: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting and Child Marriage among the Rendille, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu and Somali Communities in Kenya* (Nairobi: UNICEF, 2017), 98. <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/531/file/Kenya-0000074.pdf.pdf>. Accessed on 28/03/2024 at 9:24 am.

³⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2005), 72-73.

³⁵ African Bible, *1st Corinthians* (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 1999), Chapter 7:25-29.

Freedom can only be enjoyed if it is reciprocated by the parties involved. It is only through reciprocating freedom that the dignity of the girl child can be enhanced. This is where each one is willing to listen to the other, exchanging ideas, and expressing one's feelings without offending the other. It is more important especially when it comes to the political arena. One's ideas or manifestos are taken positively without bias, something that boosts the girls' esteem because their views are counted as vital. They can feel like they are part of society and have something positive to contribute towards its development. Moreover, they will feel recognized, and valued like any other human being. Through sharing freedom, the girl child can gauge her strengths and weaknesses thus balancing life by making the right judgments and decisions. It is only through the freedom of others, that we grow as each one of us faces life realities.³⁶

Whenever there is no reciprocity of freedom, one gender feels oppressed and what is best in them is not fully manifested because of some inferiority complexes that pull them down. Freedom helps the girls to believe in their potential, thus tapping into the opportunities presented before them, because one feels the strength to continue even if she encounters obstacles on the way. All these contribute to them being independent rather than depending on men in their daily transactions. Through freedom reciprocation, they can make bold decisions without fearing anything thus being authentic in life.³⁷

It is only by responding to freedom, that some societal demands will be properly engaged and applied. The girl child will be able to take personal responsibility for her life, likewise, the community will take its part. Thus, being mindful of the other person and oneself.

1.3.2 Freedom and the Transcendence of Social Expectations

Freedom helps the girl child to surpass the societal expectation or interests, by being open to the collective future of the society, that is by incarnating or substantiating. Once they start to exceed societal expectations, their horizon will expand or widen and as a result, they will contribute more to society than when they remain fulfilling or confined to what society has already defined for them.³⁸ Here it is where the girl child will have grown, unlike the children whose world is already defined for them by the society. People who cannot challenge what they have found.³⁹ This is whereby we come to an understanding that it is only by challenging societal expectations, that girl child will grow and make changes, especially in the global warming, blue economy (fisheries, coastal protection, marine biotechnology, waste disposal, energy among others), human dignity, technology such as artificial intelligence, human trafficking and body organ harvesting, mental health, and child safeguarding and protection among other emerging issues in our current world.

The girl will have diverse new ways of dealing with ethical and moral issues rather than just relying on outdated customs, beliefs, and traditional ways of handling them. For example, some believe that epileptic cases are mad people or bewitched so they are to undergo certain rituals to be cleansed. Freedom will help girls to appreciate themselves and others as beings created by the infinite being, and special beings endowed with higher abilities to go beyond themselves. By transcending the societal, especially the outdated practices, their dignity is enhanced at the same time helping the society to change its perspectives such as being allowed to make free decisions. When will they learn to be independent and live authentic lives which they define and find meaning in it? It is only by being involved in demystifying what society has constructed, challenging their minds, and efforts that they can actualize their dreams because they have the potential to make changes.

Also, the girls have the responsibility to rise above the social norms that constrains them to stay in their homes, procreate, care of the home, husband, children, and family properties. There is a need to initiate dialogue for both girls and boys for mutual understanding and promotion of human dignity. The parties involved will share their views, ideas, visions, motivations, and disappointments to come to an agreement where no party is oppressed or injustice is encountered in the process of executing what they would have deliberated on. Through freedom, the

³⁶ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Translated by Bernard Frechtman (New York: The Citadel Press, 1948), 71.

³⁷ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 655-657.

³⁸ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 419

³⁹ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 35-37.

girls can determine and define their lives according to the values they uphold. This helps in standing out as an individual who has dignity for oneself and others.

Freedom helps the girls to obtain soft skills like good communication, and technical skills like web development, data analysis, financial management, and writing which contribute to the earning of their livelihood. Through all these, one's life can be improved thus contributing to his or her dignity. For example, when one has an income, she can cater to her needs like health something that gives her the energy and confidence to stand before people. She has more opportunities to mingle with people and participate in various activities as compared to when sick and indoors. In general, freedom helps one to improve one's social life thus high dignity.

1.3.3 Freedom as the Basis for All Values

Freedom is the foundation for all values which can be individual, family values, community values, societal values, national values, or continental values.⁴⁰ Freedom, helps the person to define the values, monitor them, evaluate them, and work towards fulfilling them. Though values vary according to how they are defined by the persons or society involved, freedom helps one to be more authentic, actualize, and universalize them considering that they apply to human beings who deserve dignity. Being the root for all values, freedom necessitates that whatever the people regard as value covers a large section of the people.

Freedom will help the girl child to take the initiative to do things for instance, being serious with education; making sacrifices, seeking where it can be found, attending lessons, participating actively in class work, doing research, looking for school fees, applying for scholarships, bursaries, look for people of goodwill and well-wishers, wake up early mornings and sleeping late to ensure that she gets the best since she is free and understands the benefits of the education. Freedom will bring about serenity consequently, the power to voluntarily act and participate in various activities thus happiness. This is where we realize that De Beauvoir's concept of freedom becomes relevant to the girl child today because it inspires her to define her values and work towards actualizing them. This brings about the accomplishment of one's dreams, visions, goals, and mission in her life, rather than relying on others and waiting for divine intervention.

Freedom will motivate her to keep on moving, despite the obstacles she might encounter on the way, for instance, poverty at home, sickness, negative customs such as early marriages, irresponsible parents, and inaccessibility of schools or learning institutions and materials among others. This is because she will be focusing on what she values and the freedom to do them. Through freedom, the girl child will be helped to know and acknowledge the values of the family, society, nation, and continent. By doing so, she transcends personal values by being positive to other values, challenging the negative values in the appropriate way like following the legal law. For example, if she values education and the parents are not for it, she can apply for bursaries, and scholarships, instead of prostituting around to get school fees or killing or abusing them. This will preserve self-dignity and that of others. Freedom helps them to keep focused, aim higher, and follow their dreams up to the end.

Freedom as a source of all values, for example, stirred Wangari Maathai to advocate for the environment especially the Uhuru Park in Nairobi, where the government was planning to build a skyscraper (Times Tower). She was convinced, that the place was a source of refreshment or recreation for the future generation.⁴¹ The freedom she had motivated her not to keep quiet nor fear to express her concern. From this example, the girl child is moved to face the challenges that she might encounter in her life, thus the way of advancing her dignity. Freedom helps one not to give up but rather keep focusing on the goals she has.⁴² Freedom made Maathai not allow intimidation such as insults she got from the government to reign over her.⁴³ From this, we are encouraged to keep on fighting for our freedom so that we do not give up on our positive values.

1.3.4 Freedom is to Uplift Others

⁴⁰ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 24.

⁴¹ Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: One Woman's Story* (Great Britain: Arrow Books Publisher, 2006), 188.

⁴² Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*, 184-189.

⁴³ Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*, 190-191.

According to De Beauvoir, freedom should not drive one to trick other people into failures rather should help them to realize them and come out of them.⁴⁴ This is where we can think of the bribes that happen in our various sectors of governments, recruitment process or employment procedures for the girl child, the education in term of exams cheating and getting vague results. Another important example is the dress code for the girls. As much as it is one's freedom to dress in any manner, De Beauvoir's idea of freedom not to lure others into problems is very crucial. It challenges them to be mindful of others because not all people can control themselves. This indicates that one is not willing to seduce the other person, which is one way of considering his or her dignity. Whether she or he is good or bad, one is to help him realize the snares she or he can get into, hence avoiding troubles. It implies that she wishes the other good and is ready to promote his or her dignity. The weaknesses of others are not to lead us into jubilation because the world is round and what goes around comes back.

Being finite beings, we are limited, and as such we are potential candidates for failure. Failures in life, in one way or another, undignify the person because one is filled with the feelings of being incapable of something. Freedom is a way for one to make the right judgment and, thus the right decisions concerning things without being coerced. It is a way that enables one to view things or issues from various perspectives, and this brings about a deeper understanding. For instance, if a person is involved in a controversial issue like abortion or mercy killing and is limited in understanding, the other person whose conscious is free can shed more light on it therefore freeing oneself and the other person from the mistakes she would have been caught into. Unless the person to whom light is shed chooses to do the opposite.

This is where one can judge a person as either free or not free because he or she is expected to make the right ethical judgment using the freedom given in consideration to dignity. Are you free to take the money and procure an abortion or save a life? At the same time receive bribes to write vague reports about the cause of the death of a person involved in an accident or keep it a secret not to reveal the persons involved in the issue. This too applies to the politicians and the lawmakers to use properly their freedom in making and formulating laws and policies that aim at promoting the dignity of the girl child and the whole humanity. They have freedom and should not use it to entice the citizens, especially the vulnerable ones like the sick, people in marginalized areas, children, the old, and people living with disabilities. Freedom is to help people not to condemn others when they fall short of societal expectations. Parents have the freedom to correct their girls, to enhance their dignity. They are called upon to administer it in the loving and the right way possible. Even those being corrected have the obligation of appreciating the correction given positively because if negatively received it can lead to damage thus degrading the dignity of the person(s) involved. Correcting another person is not an obvious thing to do. We have to remember that, it takes courage, humility, love, and risk for one to correct the other person. Freedom helps the girl child to come out of negative relationships and practices because she values her dignity and life thus avoiding ruining it.

1.3.5 Freedom that Opens Doors to Others

The idea of freedom not willing itself alone, but being open for De Beauvoir is of great importance when it comes to the dignity of the girl child. This suggests that in the process of being willing to be free or getting freedom, the girl child will not only be limiting herself to what benefits her alone. She is to be open that is being flexible to welcome the freedom of others. It challenges her to be open-minded because she lives in a world where there are other people. These people need freedom too because they are transactions taking or that will take place between them. If freedom is limited to a particular person or group then there will be no growth and one cannot determine if her or his dignity is observed or not. It is only by experiencing the other person, that we can make the right judgment when it comes to human dignity otherwise what will you be comparing yourself with?

The non-human surroundings, only help us to a small degree as compared to the human person who can observe, think, reflect, analyze, interpret, judge, make decisions, and find solutions where necessary. Through freedom, the girl child will be mindful of other people's dignity because dignity encompasses humanity. Humanity calls us to overcome ourselves and reach out to others regardless of who they are. Whether rich, poor, elite, or illiterate a human being deserves dignity which is a gift endowed to us all by the Supreme Being. Likewise, through wishing others freedom the girl child, will be able to love and appreciate them.

⁴⁴ Simone De Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 30.

1.3.6 Freedom is Consciousness of Responsibility

In *Ethics of Ambiguity*, De Beauvoir, talks of freedom as not to do what one wishes. This shows that we are not to be guided by our inclinations. Freedom has limits, and no one can claim to have it objectively. It is always in progress thus becoming an indefinite movement.⁴⁵ Basically, freedom is not the ability to choose any object or any style of behavior, but the ability to understand oneself, hence, consciously affirming or denying some things. It is the opportunity to decide for or against oneself before what is presented to him or her. The power to do or not to do something knowingly in the right way.⁴⁶ Once freedom lacks limits, it means that people will have their egoistic nature taking control, and in such a situation then no common denominator where people can converge despite their differences. De Beauvoir calls us to reject such a notion of freedom. One's freedom is not to limit another person's freedom. It is only through freedom, that the girl child can outdo the given situation thus contributing to both her and others' dignity.⁴⁷

This challenges the girl child to have limits in her doings, regardless of the level of freedom she might have. This is central to the girl child because by having limits she will be in a position not to do things overboard such as in her relationship with the opposite sex. It will help her to respect her body, and the marriage of others, reflect on her language usage, and the choice of words to use otherwise she might use words recklessly, and know her audience among other things. All these enhance her dignity in the society she lives.

Secondly, by freedom having limits, it shows that girls are limited in one way or the other as finite beings, and as such they need each other to fulfill their expectations, be it socially, economically, spiritually, emotionally, and politically. Freedom helps the girl child tame her behaviors to avoid stepping on others as she too expects them not to step on her thus keeping boundaries. If freedom is not limited there would be no peace in this world because everyone would do as she or he wishes thus chaos due to endless unresolved conflicts for everyone will be claiming his or her freedom. This is where laws and rights come into play to guide us on how we ought to live in society. That is why we appreciate De Beauvoir's views on freedom. Additionally, by having freedom, you do not do as you want, and people should be made aware of it. If they do not live accordingly, they should be responsible for the consequences. This is to help promote human dignity for all people.⁴⁸

Freedom not to do as one likes helps people to reflect before acting. For instance, some parents and communities like the Maasai force young girls to be cut and be married to men of not their wish and age. It challenges people to also reflect on their actions and the future consequences if they are right or not. How does it impact the other person, oneself, and society at large? Whatever we do, it directly or indirectly affects us and the other person either positively or negatively. Moreover, it is the others that help us to define and actualize our dreams in life, thus promoting our dignity.

Objections to De Beauvoir's Notion of Dignity

For Catherine Wilson, De Beauvoir's notion that specialization for women is concerned with elitism, which only deals with a few privileged women. She maintains that her approach to the issue of women lacking social dignity is exclusive to industrialized nations and cannot be applied universally. For her, the issue of advising women not to marry and bear children but instead to seek education does not solve the problem of women especially single mothers in India and Africa. She also pointed out that De Beauvoir did not focus on the contradiction that exists between women's attachment to and sense of duty toward their children and the constraints of specialization. But what she had to say about motherhood wasn't inane or boring.⁴⁹

We also see De Beauvoir's idea of relating human dignity to the material and intellectual world is questionable. Dignity is inherent and endowed to human beings by the Supreme Being, and no contingent being can take it away. Comparing it to the material and intellectual world, it would mean that at one time, it can cease to be possible.

⁴⁵ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 32.

⁴⁶ Karl Rahner, *Grace in Freedom*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 212-213.

⁴⁷ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 91.

⁴⁸ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 136-137.

⁴⁹ Emily R. Grosholz, *The Legacy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 112.

Otherwise, mentally challenged persons, the sick, the physically handicapped, children, and dead persons would not be valued.

Conclusion

We have seen that freedom is very essential in one's life. It can make a person grow if well taken, but if wrongly grasped it can lead to chaos and misunderstanding among the people in society. Everyone deserves freedom because when granted we can easily differentiate a person who conceives it by the kind of life she or he lives if authentic or inauthentic. Freedom should be reciprocated for every person not to feel oppressed or mistreated by the other person consequently appreciating each other. This helps us to define and find meaning in our lives wherever we are thus advancing human dignity. Through freedom, the girl child's dignity can be enhanced to a higher level thus contributing to the solutions for the many problems she encounters that deters her dignity.

This article challenges not only the girl child but all of us to come out of our comfort zones, and work on all aspects of freedom to promote human dignity in society today. Through freedom, we can truly recognize our values, other people's values, societal values, national values, and continental values thus appreciating each other thus achieving happiness and peace. Dignity is more important than rights. It is a natural gift endowed to all human beings by the infinite Being and cannot be taken away. Therefore, our dignity is not to be measured by how we are viewed by others or how we relate to the material and the intellectual world. It is our task now to delve into the role a girl child has to play to enhance the dignity of the human person.

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