

Editorial

The fortieth anniversary of Sartre's death, on April 15 of this year, found much of the world in lockdown in response to a new virus, Covid-19, which has changed humanity's situation on this planet in ways we will be struggling to elucidate for years to come. In these unprecedented circumstances, Sartre's thought has been an obvious resource to help us understand the impact and ramifications of this pandemic. The virus has been an unsparing indicator in itself of social injustice, unmasking the pious platitudes of our advanced, modern democracies. In the United States in particular, the reality is truly ugly. Covid-19 has shed pitiless light on the disparity between affluent white communities, able to "shelter in place" and avoid putting their members at risk of infection, and less affluent black and brown districts, where workers on subsistence salaries, often without health-care benefits, have been forced to work in unsafe conditions, with terrible consequences for them and their families. Living in the "richest" country on earth, we can imagine only too easily Sartre's vitriolic assessment of America in its present crisis. And it is just as easy to imagine the fervor with which he would have embraced the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted all over the world, provoked by the 8 minute 46 second video clip that showed the matter-of-fact murder by asphyxiation of George Floyd by white police officers in Minneapolis.

Some invocations of Sartre's thinking came from less anticipated sources. In his speech to the French nation on April 13, President Emmanuel Macron let France know that the country would have to remain on lockdown for a further four weeks. But, he added, the need for rules imposing constraints on social behavior to safeguard the country's health and security should in no way be interpreted as an infringement on citizens' freedoms. Confinement, he said, should not be seen as prohibiting individual behavior, but providing the circumstances under which it could be transformed and reinvented. A commitment to deal with a collective threat does not stop life or creativity. Reactivating the Sartrean concept of "situated freedom,"

Macron made an appeal to the French people that connected choices and responsibility.

The articles in this year's issue do not yet take up the problem of reading Sartre in these new conditions, but we are confident that next year's installment will address our new reality and the social upheaval it has provoked. Institutional violence, however, is a major theme in this year's issue. An article by Daniel Sullivan links institutional violence and Sartre's celebrated analysis of a boxing match in the second volume of the *Critique of Dialectical Violence* to demonstrate that individual conflicts incarnate broader forces of structural violence. Using two films, Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler* and Steve McQueen's *Hunger*, Sullivan examines these instances of incarnating violence in terms of their broader social effects, as either alienated—commoditized or mystified (*The Wrestler*), or emancipatory—embedded in a collectively willed political project (*Hunger*). For his part, Hiroaki Seki visits the largely unstudied relationship and exchanges between Sartre and a contemporary writer and philosopher of language, Brice Parain, Against the backdrop of World War I and the crisis in communication it provoked—its “inhuman” impact on language—Seki argues that Sartre's evolution in the late 1930s from the “inhuman” novel, *Nausea*, to the humanist positions of the committed writer of the late 1940s owe much to his reflections on Parain's writings. In the final part of his article, Seki suggests provocatively that Parain's attachment to his religious faith, perceived as a weakness by Sartre, is nevertheless perceptible in Sartre's investment and unassailable faith in literary writing.

Other articles revisit Sartre's ontology and his early incursions into phenomenology. Ronald Santoni takes up the problem of our fundamental desire to be Being-in-itself-for-itself, and asks whether that desire constitutes the ontological structure of the For-itself, thus rendering bad faith an essential and inevitable feature in human existence. Santoni rejects Jonathan Webber's interpretation that the bad faith project is contingent and culturally empirical, and contends that the *desire* to be God is, as Sartre maintains, part of the “deep-seated structure of human reality.” As an ontological structure, this desire marks our natural or primordial disposition toward bad faith.

Returning to Sartre's famous revision of intentionality, separating him from Husserl, Blake Scott draws an important distinction between Husserl's “theoretical intentionality”, which operates at the level of perception, and Sartre's “practical intentionality”, which operates at the level of our concrete action as being-in-the-world. Scott argues that it is by moving phenomenology in the direction of practical consciousness that Sartre can account for the intuition of absences, presented in

the famous example of Pierre's absence in the café. Understanding intentionality in practical terms, continues Scott, Pierre's absence is no longer merely a perceptual object but a practical one induced by a project, even if that failed project is not concretely realized.

Taking up the problem of intentionality from a different perspective, Curtis Sommerlatte argues that it is through Levinas that Sartre sees intentionality as constituting the *being* of consciousness, effectively giving phenomenology its ontological foundation. For Sommerlatte, Levinas highlights in his study of Husserl two ideas that become central in Sartre's phenomenology: the non-substantiality of consciousness and its pre-reflective awareness of itself. This focus on the ontological status of consciousness presents however a methodological problem. Can reflective consciousness, which invariably modifies the consciousness it reflects on, grasp and accurately describe consciousness as it is concretely lived? Sommerlatte contends that Sartre devises a solution to this problem by developing two of Levinas' ideas. The first is a view of temporality that can account for consciousness's enduring character; the second is a view of pure reflection that is rooted in consciousness's resolve to realize its own being as a free subject. From Sommerlatte's perspective, Sartre believes that phenomenological ontology is possible only for a consciousness that is "purified by the pre-reflective conversion" to comprehend itself as freedom in its different temporal dimensions.

Three book reviews on very different facets of Sartre's activity and thought round out this year's issue. Happy reading!

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