

Editors' Introduction

Readers will recall that we devoted a special issue to anti-Black racism in 2021, in support of the Black Lives Matter movement which gained momentum following the 2020 murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd by police officers in Louisville and Minneapolis. The present issue continues to address the problem of racism from a Sartrean perspective, with an interview of the pioneering Black Existentialist thinker Lewis R. Gordon, followed by articles that take up related themes in freedom and oppression.

In T. Storm Heter's interview with Lewis Gordon, Gordon explains how Sartre studies has changed since the 1995 publication of his *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*. He discusses the Black Lives Matter movement, the challenges of anti-racist institution-building (outside and inside the academy), and his hope for the future. Against the "pessimists," Gordon outlines a vision of philosophy that is born of struggle, born from writings of Global Southern authors, and yet is rooted in hope and humanism.

Appraising one of today's leading Black Feminist Existentialist thinkers and activists, Angela Davis, Edward O'Byrn re-interprets Davis's well-known critique of Sartre in her "Lectures on Liberation." His article, "Reading Angela Davis Beyond the Critique of Sartre," surveys the foundational literature devoted to Davis's reading of Sartre (especially that of Lewis Gordon, George Yancy, Frank Kirkland, and LaRose Parris), and concludes that "Davis was performing a new kind of existential philosophy rooted in the Black American context." O'Byrn draws upon Sartre's *Notebooks for an Ethics* and the lesser known essay, "Return from the United States: What I Learned About the Negro Problem," to show that, while Sartre turned his attention to slavery and anti-Black racism in America, he "failed to trace the historical records of the oppressed." Ultimately, O'Byrn argues, the implication of Davis's reading of Sartre is a

Black Existentialism that refuses to make Black philosophers “ancillaries to dominant European philosophers.”

Shuchen Xiang’s contribution, “Sinophobia, American Imperialism, Disorder without Responsibility,” extends Sartre’s analysis of anti-Semitism to the situation of anti-Asian racism in the United States. Xiang argues that Sartre’s anti-racist framework is unique because it allows for a material *and* psychological critique of Sinophobia. Modern anti-Asian racism, she submits, is more than economic; it is also psychological. The ideology of American imperialism comes under scrutiny when Xiang shows how the image of China operates like “any other savage or barbarian of the Western imagination: Africans, Arabs, native Americans, in sum the non-Western world.” The myth of the *Chinese Other* underpins U.S. imperial land grabs abroad and violence at home. On the existential view, Xiang argues that the Sinophobe, like the anti-Semite, operates in bad faith. Ultimately, Xiang concludes, anti-racist movements should also be anti-imperialist if we are to challenge the normalization of Sinophobia.

Ouarda Larbi Youcef’s article, “Sartre and Camus: In/Justice and Freedom in the Algerian Context,” portrays the collapse of the friendship between Sartre and Camus as a casualty of the Algerian War of Independence. She argues that the friendship had no chance of surviving given Sartre’s unwavering commitment to the Algerians’ cause, and Camus’ reluctance to support the idea of independence. As a pied-noir, Camus saw the land as belonging to everyone and was concerned about any violence that might be directed at his community. He made it clear that while he “believed in justice,” he would “defend his mother before justice.” In Larbi Youcef’s account, Camus’ fault lies in his being “an idealist and a dreamer” who believed naively that the colonists would change their attitude and behavior toward the colonized, to treat them as equals rather than as the other. In the end, Camus remained a stranger to the Algerians.

The current issue also features Sarah Horton’s “The Look as a Call to Freedom,” in which she reexamines the Sartrean look in a positive light through a close reading of Sartre’s *Notebooks for an Ethics* and Beauvoir’s *Ethics of Ambiguity*. Horton sees in the look possibilities for forging solidarity rather than oppressive relations, and argues that, regardless of the looker’s intention, the look reveals to me my co-existence with others, and offers me “the gift of within-the-worldness” that effectively “inaugurates” my freedom, in so far as my freedom can be exercised only in concrete situations that are constituted by other free beings. Horton further maintains that the look also offers the possibility for an experience of grace, one that involves the pursuit

of my freedom with and alongside others within a world we share. To experience grace I must receive the look authentically by recognizing others as free subjects whose freedom is inextricably connected to mine, and whose freedom I must embrace if I am to embrace my own. Solidarity rather than oppressive relations

The issue rounds out with Thomas Meagher's review of Mabogo Percy More's *Sartre on Contingency: Antiblack Racism and Embodiment* (2021). More's latest book, part of the Rowman and Littlefield books series *Living Existentialism*, offers a radical re-reading of Sartre. Meagher credits More with many important contributions, including: situating Sartre's work in dialogue with a number of Africana thinkers; tracing Sartre's historical and contemporary reception; and developing an excellent account of the contingency of the lived body.

Enjoy!

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