

Abstracts

The Impossible Project of Love in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, *Dirty Hands*, and *The Room*

Jean Wyatt

ABSTRACT: In *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre explains love as a strategy for achieving control over “being-for-others,” the objectified aspect of the self imposed by others’ defining looks. Two contemporaneous fictions by Sartre, *The Room* (1939) and *Dirty Hands* (1948), expand the notions of love and of being-for-others in surprising directions. *Dirty Hands* shows the creative, productive potential of being-for-others: Hugo’s reliance on the other for his self-definition paradoxically generates his decisive embrace of being-for-itself. *The Room* dramatizes the role of the family in constituting a child’s subjectivity: Eve’s family situation explains her ontological imprisonment in the dimension of being-for-others. The two stories’ tolerant vision of the complex social and psychological reasons for adopting being-for-others as one’s dominant modality contrasts with Sartre’s rigorous critique of reliance on being-for-others as a form of bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*. The fictions’ enlarged perspective on human love and on being-for-others provides a framework for complicating and critiquing the ontological categories presented in *Being and Nothingness*.

KEYWORDS: being-for-others, love, family structure, identification, freedom, being-for-itself

Authenticity and Others: Sartre’s Ethics of Recognition

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ABSTRACT: This article presents a novel defense of Sartrean ethics based on the concept of interpersonal recognition. The immediate post-war texts *Anti-Semite and Jew*, *What is Literature?* and *Notebooks for an Ethics* express Sartre’s inchoate yet ultimately defensible

view of obligations to others. Such obligations are not best understood as Kantian duties, but rather as Hegelian obligations of mutual recognition. The emerging portrait of Sartrean ethics offers a strong reply to the classical criticism that authenticity would license vicious lifestyles like serial killing. In addition to acting with clarity and responsibility, existentially authentic individuals must respect others.

KEYWORDS: Sartre, recognition, authenticity, existentialism, respect.

Concrete Consciousness: Sartre's Relevance to Contemporary Philosophy of Mind

Joel W. Krueger

ABSTRACT: In this essay, I argue that Sartre's notion of *pre-reflective consciousness* can be summoned to offer a general challenge to contemporary functionalist accounts of mind, broadly construed. In virtue of the challenge Sartre offers these contemporary functionalist accounts and the richness of his phenomenological analysis, I conclude that his voice needs to be included in ongoing debates over the nature of consciousness. First, I look at some of the basic claims motivating functionalist accounts of mind. Next, I look at Sartre's notion of pre-reflective consciousness and discuss how this notion challenges functionalist accounts of mentality. I conclude by suggesting that Sartre's rendering of pre-reflective consciousness remains overly cognitivist. I show how this notion can be deepened to include the sensory-motor capacities of the situated body—resulting in a pre-reflective *bodily* self-awareness—and how this deepened formulation offers a further challenge to functionalist accounts of mind.

KEYWORDS: Sartre, consciousness, embodiment, pre-reflective self-awareness, functionalism

The Double Writing of *Les Mots*: Sartre's *Words* as Performative Philosophy

John F. Whitmire, Jr.

ABSTRACT: Sartre's *Les Mots* has given rise to widely divergent competing readings in the philosophical literature, which tend to view it either as a simple continuation of his earlier, radical libertarianism, or as part of an alleged wholesale renunciation of the position we find in his early texts. I argue that most of these readings ignore the very real tensions in *Words* between the freedom of consciousness and the

weight of circumstances. I further argue that *Les Mots* is a performative text whose double writing (originally composed 1954–1957; rewritten 1963) demonstrates for us that, whereas we cannot simply renounce our past and the original meanings mediated to us in childhood through our families, we do have the power to take it up in ways that skew those meanings in somewhat different directions. No matter what we do, however, the blurred outlines of those original meanings will always remain.

KEYWORDS: Sartre, *Les Mots*, words, autobiography, self, subject, conversion, palimpsest, performative.

Sartre and the Word

Debra Berghoffen

ABSTRACT: Jean Pierre Boulé’s *Sartre, Self Formation and Masculinities* argues that we cannot adequately understand Sartre without taking account of the unique ways in which he negotiated the gender mandates of patriarchy. Taking Boulé’s cue, I call on Lacan, Cixous and Beauvoir to interrogate Sartre’s relationship to women, to his body and to writing. I argue for Boulé’s approach but against several of his conclusions. Further, I credit Boulé with providing ammunition for challenging Lacan’s universal account of the mirror stage, and for pushing me to read Beauvoir’s “Must we Burn Sade?” as a critique of Sartre’s betrayal of the erotic’s ethical demands.

KEYWORDS: Lacan, Cixous, Beauvoir, body, women, patriarchy

Sartre on the Couch

Thomas R. Flynn

ABSTRACT: Despite Sartre’s almost proverbial rejection of Freudian psychoanalysis, Jean-Pierre Boulé places the philosopher himself on the couch in a wonderfully detailed and suggestive work. He notes that the fruit of his study may well be “to help us gain a better understanding of Sartre as an embodied sexual being and possibly demonstrate a new way of connecting biography with oeuvre.” After analyzing Boulé’s argument and considering the psychoanalytic method itself, I address this last claim about relating Sartre’s biography and oeuvre, especially in view of the integral role assigned biography in any existentialist theory of history.

KEYWORDS: Sartre, Boulé, psychoanalysis

Thinking with Sartre

Jean-Pierre Boulé

ABSTRACT: This piece explores the background to writing *Sartre, Self-Formation and Masculinities* and explains the theoretical tools used in the book before examining some of the issues raised by Bergoffen and Flynn in their critical review-articles and responding to these. It provides a more fully fledged account of Sartre's relationship with psychoanalysis and states how the book combines psychology and biography through a masculinity-aware lens. Both commentators stimulate interesting insights into my own essay, and open up new avenues which I sketch out. The piece ends with a defence of the controversial question of Sartre changing towards the end of his life.

KEYWORDS: masculinities, self-formation, narcissism, psychoanalysis, authenticity, violence