Book Reviews

Gaye Çankaya Eksen, *Spinoza et Sartre: De la politique des singularités à l'éthique de générosité. Préface de Chantal Jacquet* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), 293 pp., 39 €, ISBN 9782406058007 (paperback).

What does Spinoza, a philosopher notorious for his determinism, share with Sartre, a philosopher of freedom? Gaye Çankaya Eksen's work offers one possible answer to this question. Through a comparative study of the two philosophers' political writings, Eksen shows that Spinoza and Sartre are equally concerned with the construction of communities that can help individuals secure and cultivate their freedom. While everything separates Spinoza and Sartre's philosophies at the metaphysical level, Eksen argues that the two thinkers can be fruitfully read as equally vigorous opponents of Hobbes' classical version of contractualism. Hobbes' social contract theory thinks of subjects as rationally and irreversibly transferring their natural right to the sovereign, with any subsequent dissent framed as irrational and illegitimate. By contrast, in Eksen's eyes both Spinoza and Sartre conceive of the relation between the state of nature and civil society as reversible, and preserve a conception of individuals' irreducible freedom within civil society itself.

Eksen's engaging and often revelatory study is divided into two parts. In the first, 'La pensée politique chez Spinoza et Sartre', Eksen critiques Alexandre Matheron's claim that Sartre's conception of the passage from series to group is analogous to Hobbes' account of the transformation of the state of nature into civil society. While accepting that this analogy holds on a number of crucial points—not least the conflictual and self-defeating nature of subjects' actions in both the state of nature and seriality—Eksen shows that it misses what's essential to Sartre's theoretical invention: the re-actualisation of subjects' freedom in the group. For Hobbes, the state of nature is a site of freedom in the form of anarchy, and civil society a space where subjects rationally submit to the sovereign. In Sartre's *Critique*, by contrast, as Eksen convincingly shows, the series is a site of both impotence

© UKSS and NASS
Sartre Studies International Volume 27, Issue 1, 2021: 129–150
doi:10.3167/ssi.2021.270107 ISSN 1357-1559 (Print) • ISSN 1558-5476 (Online)

07-Reviews.indd 129 5/12/21 3:36 PM

and inertia, while the group implies a form of quasi-sovereignty that allows each group member to freely direct it in turn.

Following these ground-clearing remarks, Eksen proceeds to demonstrate that the resurgence of freedom in the group means that on the question of civil society's constitution, Sartre is closer to Spinoza than to Hobbes. For Spinoza, too, views civil society as a space where subjects can best actualise their freedom, which he conceives of as their capacity to understand Nature. Eksen also brings out the fact that both Sartre and Spinoza equally insist on the particularity, not only of each individual subject, but also of the community as a whole. Finally, Eksen draws attention to the similar accounts the two philosophers give of the passage subjects take from a situation of submission to one of active contestation: in the work of both philosophers, we see individuals' self-centred indignation transform into hope through the perception of others in a similar plight.

In the second part of her work, 'L'articulation de la politique des singularités et de l'éthique de générosité chez Spinoza et Sartre', Eksen identifies an intriguing point of contact between the two thinker's theories when it comes to maintaining subjects' freedom in society: both privilege generosity as a subjective orientation that allows individuals to cultivate an active form of social peace. With respect to Sartre, Eksen turns to the *Notebooks for an Ethics* for Sartre's most extensive comments on generosity as an ethical attitude by which we at once accept our irremediable ontological alienation, but do so with a view to struggling against ontic forms of alienation—both our own alienation and that of others as well. As for Spinoza, Eksen points to the concept of *generositas*—which Curley translates as "nobility"—as a strategy by which we attempt to react to others' hate or similarly sad affects with love. Through *generositas*, Spinoza shows, we help turn the community way from sterile conflict and towards the mutual benefits of knowledge, or freedom.

We owe Eksen a debt of gratitude for showing how it is possible to think alongside these two philosophers simultaneously. *Spinoza et Sartre* demonstrates that incompatible metaphysics need not mean incompatible politics, and that mutually-enriching dialogue between wildly different thinkers is conceivable if one suspends the—admittedly quite philosophical—desire to drive straight for the foundations of a philosopher's work. Her study's often surprising results suggest that further work clarifying the relation between Sartre's *Critique* and classical political thought would be welcome. Inevitably, however, Eksen's project of aligning Sartre with Spinoza on some points invites the reader to conceive of what still separates the two thinkers, including on the

07-Reviews.indd 130 5/12/21 3:36 PM

socio-political terrain that Eksen explores. Most fundamentally, to my mind, the question arises as to whether *both* seriality *and* the group—along with the group's derivative forms—should be situated on the side of civil society, or indeed whether these two concepts actually *confound* the traditional distinction between the state of nature and civil society. What's unique about seriality, in my view, is that it is rule-governed and predictable—and is thus like civil society in the classical conception—yet simultaneously undermines its subjects' interests in the long-term. Even more crucially, seriality does this in the guise of a teleological process that appears to be ruled over by a single, sovereign-like force, despite no-one actually controlling it. For this reason, seriality undermines the very foundations of the classical distinction between the state of nature and civil society, not to mention between the people and their sovereign leader. Furthermore, while Eksen focuses on the crucial passage from seriality to the group, from the perspective of Sartre's *Critique* as a whole this is an abstract moment in a broader dialectic. The relation between series and group is not only *reversible*—as Eksen rightly says when distinguishing Sartre from Hobbes—it is also *simultaneous*. Because she identifies Sartre's group with Spinoza's civil society to aid her comparison, Eksen overlooks the fact that when Sartre talks about "society" at all, he conceives of it as a dynamic dialectic between series, groups-in-fusion, pledged groups, organisations, and institutions, all of which have singular and, again, *simultaneous* relations with one another. It seems to me that Eksen's Spinozist question of how a society can be geared towards cultivating its subjects' freedom must therefore be posed at this more complex level as well. Finally, when it comes to constructing a relation of concord between subjects in a particular group, in addition to the ethical considerations Eksen focuses on in her discussion of generosity, Sartre's more specifically socio-political considerations should also be included, not least those related to the two different kinds of terror that emerge at the level of the pledged group and the institution respectively.

If I have been able to make any of the above critical suggestions at all, it is only because Eksen's work, with its unprecedented comparison between Sartre and Spinoza, forces us to articulate more clearly than ever what makes Sartre's *Critique* truly unique. For this reason alone, her work is a perfect example of the generosity that, thanks to her, we now know both Sartre and Spinoza foreground as the ideal form our relations with others should take.

Robert Boncardo
The University of Sydney

07-Reviews.indd 131 5/12/21 3:36 PM

François Noudelmann, *Un tout autre Sartre* (Paris : Gallimard, 2020) 206 pp., €18 (paper) / €12.99 (e-book), ISBN 9782072887109.

'On entre dans un mort comme dans un moulin' écrivait Sartre dans sa préface à son étude sur Flaubert. Prenant au pied de la lettre cette expression du XIXème siècle, François Noudelmann ne frappe pas à la porte ni ne demande à entrer. Il emprunte une issue dérobée : les archives de sa fille adoptive, Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre (films en Super-8/ correspondance y compris avec Michelle Vian et Lena Zonina, sa traductrice russe, enregistrements audios) et, muni de son érudition considérable sur la pensée et l'œuvre de Sartre, il nous livre un portrait inédit, ô combien vivant, du philosophe, loin des querelles de clocher entre Sartre et Camus toujours aussi vivaces en France. Lui-même utilise la comparaison de Sartre avec le moulin en soulignant que, du moulin, il retiendra surtout le mouvement des ailes et le vent qui les fait tourner (p. 14).

Or, ce vent, précisément, Noudelmann le trouve dans une citation des *Carnets de la drôle de guerre* : 'Il faut être fait d'argile et je le suis de vent' pour poser l'hypothèse selon laquelle Sartre aurait chaussé des semelles de plomb pour contrer sa légèreté coutumière (p. 13). Partant du principe qu'un sujet qui écrit n'est identique ni à son moi social ni à son moi intime (p. 12), Noudelmann va débusquer les semelles de plomb (le discours politique) et nous faire découvrir la légèreté de Sartre en six grands thèmes qui s'enchaînent parfaitement, chacun étant composé de deux chapitres, révélant au passage ce qu'il nomme des 'feuilletés d'affects' (p. 14).

Dans 'La politique m'emmerde', Noudelmann déconstruit l'esprit de sérieux dans certains de ses écrits politiques ou engagements, dénonçant un style parfois 'caricatural, simpliste, manichéen', (p. 24), que ce soit à propos du communisme ou de l'anticolonialisme, voire au cours de voyages en Chine ou en URSS, pour mettre—non en opposition mais en juxtaposition—un Sartre qui rêve de pouvoir se concentrer sur l'écriture de *La Reine Albemarle ou le dernier touriste* où il exprimera librement son amour de l'Italie : 'Vivement la littérature dégagée. En revenant je me remets à la délicieuse, à la bonne Italie' (p. 26). Par rapport à l'anticolonialisme, Sartre parle de cris qu'on lui demande de pousser, notamment avec la préface au livre de Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, posant la question dans une lettre à Michelle Vian : 'Et si je n'avais pas envie de crier ?' (p. 47). Quant à l'Algérie, Sartre confie à Zonina que cette histoire '[l']emmerde drôlement' (p. 51). Noudelmann en conclut que le militant (le devoir) et le troubadour (le désir) cohabitent dans sa personne et qu'ils

07-Reviews.indd 132 5/12/21 3:36 PM

'entrent souvent dans un conflit tacite et destructeur' (p. 52). Pour lui, le 'vrai' Sartre n'existe pas. Il ne s'agit pas de disqualifier ses discours politiques mais de constater comment des vécus contradictoires produisent des écrits puissants (p. 60).

A la lecture des propos de Sartre dans sa correspondance, on ne peut s'empêcher de penser que la politique semble liée au stade anal pour lui (voire phallique : 'Enfin on essaiera de remettre ça debout demain', p. 28), ou même coprophile ('Si tu savais comme ça m'emmerde' à propos de son article sur les communistes et la paix, p. 29), alors que la littérature relèverait plutôt du stade oral. S'y greffe le sado-masochisme. Notre auteur parle ainsi d'autoflagellation pour l'écriture du brûlot politique (p. 51.) Sartre lui-même confie à Zonina qu'il a fait trop de choses qu'il n'avait pas le goût à faire, notamment les articles politiques, avant de conclure : '[…] sadisme ou masochisme : choisis, moi je crois que c'est les deux' (p. 58-59). Certes, Noudelmann est conscient de s'appuyer en partie sur des correspondances, aux styles et aux contenus différents suivant les destinataires, et qui n'ont donc pas le même statut que l'œuvre écrite. Il souligne toutefois que ces échanges offrent 'un éclairage important sur la construction des discours officiels et l'investissement psychique et paradoxal de leur auteur' (p. 28).

Cet éclairage est de nouveau en évidence dans la deuxième partie qui met en lumière le goût de Sartre pour les voyages, nous faisant découvrir une 'veine sartrienne de l'écrit de voyage' (p. 63), notamment sur l'Italie, avec une superbe analyse du texte 'Un parterre de capucines'. Dans une classification inédite, l'auteur propose de nouvelles catégories pour les périples sartriens, les plaisirs qu'ils lui procurent et les écritures qu'ils déclenchent (p. 67) : récit pittoresque ou description poétique, où se mêlent humour satirique et contemplation poétique. Sartre *s'abandonne* à une écriture jouissive. Ainsi, certaines de ces lettres vont jusqu'à trente-quatre pages. Mis à part les voyages politiques, il y a le 'voyage paysager' (souvent accompli avec des femmes séduites) où Sartre révèle une tendance vagabonde et contemplative comme on peut le voir avec les films en Super 8 tournés par Arlette Elkaïm (p. 68). Noudelmann y retrouve 'la légèreté de celui qui disait appartenir au vent' (p. 70). Dans ces écrits, on décèle un langage poétique qui décrit un 'paysage intérieur', loin du discours de maîtrise (p. 80), comme si Sartre réussissait à s'abandonner : 'Ça parle en lui, à travers lui, ça sort et ça rentre, ça le vide et le remplit' (p. 80). Tous ces textes resteront fragmentaires et le philosophe trouvera un compromis en étudiant le Tintoret 'l'autorisant à parler de l'Italie […] en investissant la dimension sociale de sa carrière' (p. 84).

07-Reviews.indd 133 5/12/21 3:36 PM

Partant de la déclaration suivante : 'J'ai toujours pensé qu'il y avait en moi une sorte de femme', 'Sartre *queer* ?' reprend l'idée de l'abandon, de l'oubli de l'action au profit de la contemplation, une posture que Sartre qualifie comme propre au plaisir féminin dans une conversation avec Beauvoir, en opposition à la maîtrise et au discours politique qu'il associe aux hommes. On peut parler d'un Sartre *queer*, dans la mesure où 'il se transporte dans un imaginaire et une sensibilité qu'il éprouve comme féminins' (p. 92) et 'ne cherche pas à "pénétrer" les choses, mais accepte de se laisser envahir par elles' (p. 93). Sartre se plaît à changer de sexe avec Michelle Vian et à prendre le rôle de la reine (on apprendra par ailleurs que leur sexualité est liée au sado-masochisme et qu'il tient le rôle du dominateur, p. 97) ; Zonina est parfois décrite comme une femme phallique (p. 94). Toutefois, le point d'interrogation subsiste car, comme le souligne Noudelmann, Sartre reste très hétéronormé et ne vit pas un rapport au monde que l'on pourrait qualifier de *queer*. Là où Sartre serait plus *queer*, c'est dans ses rapports avec Arlette Elkaïm, qu'il finira par adopter dans 'une drôle de paternité', défiant toutes les conventions, en commençant par la demande de Sartre lors d'un déjeuner à La Coupole : 'Et si on s'adoptait ?' (p. 113). Au lieu des épithètes qui ont déjà été utilisées pour qualifier leur relation (amour secondaire, attachement filial, rapports incestueux), Noudelmann préfère le terme d'*affinité* où la différence joue un rôle essentiel (p. 100).

Un tout autre Sartre sait prendre du recul avec son sujet. Ainsi, l'auteur se demande pourquoi Sartre n'a pas interrogé Arlette, qui est originaire de Constantine, sur la situation algérienne et le sort des Juifs sépharades. Selon lui, ce n'est ni par mépris ni par indifférence : '[…] elle est paradoxalement la personne qui lui permet de ne pas parler de politique' (p. 106). Que font-ils alors ? Arlette chante et Sartre l'accompagne au piano. Tous deux jouent des scènes de pièces de théâtre où Sartre affectionne particulièrement le rôle du comédien, 'le jeu emphatique, le phrasé affectif soulignant une rhétorique grandiose' (p. 107). On découvre ici un Sartre inédit, lui qui avait dit que le texte et sa publication importaient plus que la mise en scène. Ne donnons pas ici une idée superficielle d'Arlette qui l'a également aidé dans ses écritures cinématographiques (*Les Sorcières de Salem* et *Le scénario Freud*), suivi dans ses engagements politiques avant d'entreprendre un formidable travail éditorial sur ses œuvres après sa mort.

Grâce à ses nombreux entretiens réguliers avec Elkaïm-Sartre (dont cinq entretiens diffusés sur *France Culture* dans l'émission 'A voix Nue' en 2013), Noudelmann apporte des éclairages nouveaux sur

07-Reviews.indd 134 5/12/21 3:36 PM

Sartre, notamment sur la genèse du *Scénario Freud* dont Arlette fut témoin. Si le film n'a pas été une grande réussite cinématographique, il 'a provoqué un moment psychanalytique intense entre Sartre et Arlette' (p. 112), à découvrir avec la lecture de l'ouvrage... Noudelmann s'inscrit également en faux contre le témoignage de Beauvoir selon lequel Arlette se serait associée au tournant religieux de Benny Lévy (qui aurait 'détourné' Sartre dans leurs derniers entretiens parus dans *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 'L'espoir, maintenant'). Selon Noudelmann, sa judéité était culturelle et non cultuelle (p. 118). L'auteur éclaire également la relation entre Sartre et Arlette. Muni, entre autres, des dédicaces de Sartre à Arlette pour ses divers ouvrages, il déchiffre leurs rapports et en conclut que cet amour 'flottant, *queer*, indéterminé […] est vécu comme une liberté équivoque' (p. 121).

La section suivante parle des défaillances d'un homme qui était si préoccupé par le contrôle de soi ('Comment s'abandonner') en étudiant deux aspects, les drogues et les rêves. Sartre a détruit son corps avec la Corydrane (qu'il prenait pour la production de textes politiques) puis l'alcool, dans un comportement addictif où il s'est littéralement 'tué à la tâche' (p. 137). Noudelmann nous fait pénétrer dans l'envers du décor. Se reposant avec lui en Italie, Arlette témoigne combien chez Sartre ce comportement avait de fortes retombées dépressives, où se mêlaient angoisse et désespoir (p. 131). L'auteur se pose même la question : Sartre tomberait-il malade pour avoir des raisons légitimes de souffler ? C'est en tout cas la méthode sartrienne fondée sur la théorie des émotions que Noudelmann applique pour cette supputation, se demandant légitimement : 'Et si la maladie était la seule manière pour Sartre d'accepter l'abandon ?', un état que, selon Beauvoir, il dénie jusque dans sa sexualité (p. 135). Poursuivant cette voie, notamment la notion de folie telle qu'elle apparaît dans ses écrits, notre auteur retrace les liens de Sartre avec Freud et la psychanalyse. Le dernier chapitre de cette section finit sur les rêves, postulant qu'il s'agit d'une zone d'abandon qui ne pouvait qu'échapper à Sartre. Les sartriens savaient qu'Arlette avait consigné sur un carnet les rêves de Sartre pendant de nombreuses années. Quelques bribes étaient apparues ici et là. Noudelmann a pu lire ces carnets. Loin de lui l'idée d'interpréter les rêves de Sartre ! Il se contente de repérer des obsessions ou des scénarios qui confirment son portrait inédit d'un Sartre qui sait que le piège de l'imaginaire se situe dans l'usage de la métaphore (p. 149) et dont le discours philosophique fonctionnerait à titre d'antidote (p. 153). Même s'il prône une littérature réaliste dans *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* ?, Sartre contredit ses propos par ses pratiques et ses goûts (p. 149), en fréquentant 'l'hydre de l'imagination'

07-Reviews.indd 135 5/12/21 3:36 PM

dans ses loisirs et ses productions (p. 154), ainsi que par son étude de l'imaginaire chez Baudelaire, Genet et Flaubert.

Intitulée 'Dans la peau des autres', la partie suivante porte sur les biographies existentielles de Sartre. Noudelmann y voit tout autant un rêve personnel d'évasion qu'une connaissance des hommes étudiés (p. 158). Il émet l'hypothèse fascinante que la vie de ces écrivains constitue 'des existences rêvées de Sartre […] à partir [des]quelles Sartre peut se réincarner' (p. 165), 'se plonger dans ces névroses merveilleuses' (p. 166). Je laisse aux lecteurs/lectrices le plaisir de découvrir le dernier chapitre de cette partie, intitulée : 'Sartre en chien' !

'Être une musique' est un sujet familier pour qui a lu de Noudelmann, *Le Toucher des philosophes. Sartre, Nietzsche et Barthes au piano*, paru en 2008. Ici encore, Noudelmann retrace la relation de Sartre avec la musique, soulignant combien elle révèle une légèreté peu associée à sa personne (p. 181). Il utilise les archives de sa fille adoptive pour ainsi brosser le portrait d'un Sartre qui chante avec effusion et dramatise ses textes : 'Son bonheur s'entend […] il se tient dans sa voix et ce qu'elle transporte du corps, des affects, de la présence pure' (p. 185). On est loin du maître à penser de la littérature engagée, à l'entendre. Sartre trouve un abandon actif dans la musique, un vaccin contre l'angoisse et la dépression (p. 189).

Dans son chapitre final 'Une autre politique de l'existence', Noudelmann souligne le vœu de transparence de Sartre qui, dans son entretien avec Michel Contat (*Situations,* X), refusait la distinction entre vie privée et vie publique, une scission que Noudelmann refuse également d'effectuer. Ce dernier prône des personnalités multiples de Sartre, réclamant d'admettre la différence entre le *je* qui écrit et celui qui 'pense, doute, rêve et aime' (p. 193). Son constat est indéniable : Sartre écrivait des textes très différents tout comme il vécut des existences hétérogènes (p. 195). Il faut entendre chez Sartre les tensions, en écoutant les discours et les textes 'sans chercher à confirmer ou à juger les dires de l'auteur' (p. 198) afin d'arriver à une politique de l'existence qui inclut la sensibilité, les émotions, les désirs et les imaginaires, tout comme la raison et le jugement (p. 199).

L'auteur des *Mots* terminait son autobiographie ainsi : 'Tout un homme, fait de tous les hommes et qui les vaut tous et que vaut n'importe qui'. Cette chute des *Mots* ne sonnait pas tout à fait juste, l'auteur ayant passé son temps à 'déconstruire' son génie dans un style très travaillé. *Un tout autre Sartre* permet de revendiquer la conclusion des *Mots* en la faisant basculer dans le domaine de l'authenticité : le philosophe est aussi un être de chair et de sang. Certains gardiens du temple sartrien (en France et en Belgique) ne vont pas aimer ce texte

07-Reviews.indd 136 5/12/21 3:36 PM

car il déconstruit à son tour le mythe en rendant le maître-penseur plus humain et contradictoire mais, à la fois dans son intention (ainsi qu'il l'explique dans son dernier chapitre) et, dans son exécution, Noudelmann compose une petite musique de nuit pour Sartre et démontre que Sartre ne se résume pas à la métaphore du 'stakhanoviste de l'écriture' (p. 134). Il serait intéressant d'introduire 'le pape de l'existentialisme' en commençant par cet ouvrage, qui inscrirait ensuite sa pensée dans une dimension plus humaine. Si les spécialistes veulent vraiment comprendre la phrase du philosophe dans ses *Carnets de la drôle de guerre* : 'Je ne suis à l'aise que dans la liberté, échappant aux objets, échappant à moi-même', ils/elles doivent lire le présent ouvrage. 'J'ai la passion de comprendre les hommes' avait déclaré Sartre ; la passion de Noudelmann pour son sujet nous donne les clés pour comprendre Sartre, dans toute sa complexité et, donc, dans sa richesse. *Un tout autre Sartre* est caractérisé comme un 'essai', décrit comme 'iconoclaste' (p. 19) : libre à certains d'accuser l'auteur d'iconoclastie et de sacrilège. S'ils se déclarent sartriens, ils devraient savoir qu'être sartrien n'a rien à voir avec l'orthodoxie et la momification des idées. Oui, *Un tout autre Sartre* c'est encore et toujours Sartre, plus vivant que jamais.

Jean-Pierre Boulé
Nottingham Trent University

The Nietzschean Mind, edited by Paul Katsafanas (Oxford: Routledge, 2018) 475 pp., $200, ISBN: 9781138851689 (hardback) and *The Sartrean Mind*, edited by Matthew C. Eshleman and Constance L. Mui (Oxford: Routledge, 2020) 579 pp., $200, ISBN: 9781138295698 (hardback).

These are two very weighty tomes, and mark a significant attempt at a comprehensive contemporary appraisal of these two existentialist philosophers. Routledge, it seems, have pulled out all of the stops in this series (which also, at the time of writing, includes Kierkegaard, Wollstonecraft, Hume, and Rousseau) and have reached for the heights with a view to providing a definitive assessment of the minds of these seminal thinkers, something beyond just another collection of themed essays. Certainly the variety and length of the two books is impressive—twenty-eight essays, 475 pages in *The Nietzschean Mind* and forty-two essays, 579 pages in *The Sartrean Mind*—and, it is

07-Reviews.indd 137 5/12/21 3:36 PM

true to say, judging the books by their girth and by their aesthetically pleasing minimalist covers, they convey a palpable air of authority and importance. Aesthetics apart, Routledge should be commended for such an ambitious undertaking to plot so comprehensively the mind of these thinkers.

The Nietzschean Mind

Edited solely by Paul Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Mind* is divided into seven parts: Major works; Philosophical psychology and agency; The self; Value; Culture, society, and politics; Metaphysics and epistemology; The affirmation of life. The first part, 'Major works', comprises six essays, each of which (apart from Keith Ansell-Pearson's survey of his 'middle writings') focuses on one of Nietzsche's major texts, including *Dawn* (Rebecca Bamford), *The Gay Science* (Scott Jenkins), *Beyond Good and Evil* (Christa Davis Acampora), *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Allisson Merrick), and *The Antichrist* (Paul Katsafanas). While each of these contributions provides a useful perspective on these works, you do wonder from the start about those works not included in this list, the omission of which seems somewhat arbitrary—*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Human-all-too-Human*, *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Ecce Homo*, spring readily to mind. *Zarathustra*, as we know, was Nietzsche's own favourite and would seem a prime candidate for inclusion, especially given its 'bridge status' between his middle and later phases of thinking. Also, given its contentious and much-debated presence among Nietzsche's writings, an extended discussion of *The Will to Power* and Nietzsche's *Nachlass* would have provided considerable interest and context.

This criticism feeds into the rest of the book, which is assembled as a kind of collection of individual atoms that freeze Nietzsche's works in an analytical snapshot rather than show their diachronic development as an evolving unity or entelechy. This is revealed in the following sections of the book, which have the faint claustrophobic air of a closed space, slight variations on analytical themes as a form of call and response with the editor that do not really range beyond tight boundaries and fences into the full living wilderness of Nietzsche's philosophy. In Part III 'The self', for instance, each essay covers and retreads very similar ground, referencing much the same Anglophone literature and offering the same conclusion that Nietzsche, despite his deconstruction of the subject and his theorisation of biological drives, still clung to some reconstructed and discernible notion of individual agency. The exception in this section is Gabriel Zamosc's 'Nietzschean wholeness', which offers a fresh perspective on aspects

07-Reviews.indd 138 5/12/21 3:36 PM

of Nietzsche's relational ontology and references his early work in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Other essays that stand out and develop this theme of relationality in Nietzsche's thinking are Herman Siemens's 'Nietzsche's agon' and Matthew Meyer's 'Nietzsche's ontic structural realism?'. Siemens looks at Nietzsche's unpublished work *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and distils from this an 'agonistic principle of interaction' that he finds incompatible with inegalitarianism and Nietzsche's later politics of aristocratic elitism, and which offers Nietzsche's solution to the problem of individuality and sociality. In the section on 'metaphysics and epistemology', Meyer's essay analyses Nietzsche's philosophy of forces in *The Will to Power* in the context of the pre-Socratic arguments between Parmenides and Heraclitus regarding motion, change, individuation and becoming. What follows is a fascinating discussion that takes us from the monistic philosophies of Ancient Greece to contemporary debates in Quantum Physics and the Philosophy of Science, especially what Meyer terms 'Ontic Structural Realism'.

Given the 475 pages available, some omissions in this volume of essays are disappointing, in particular, the glaring absence of any glimpse of the 'French Nietzsche' or 'German Nietzsche'—no Heidegger, Jaspers, Mann, Derrida, Bataille, Kofman or Deleuze, and barely a mention of Foucault. This seems akin to scanning just a single localised region of Nietzsche's brain in trying to find out what is going on inside and gives the reader only a very partial perspective on how the Nietzschean mind can be interpreted. Furthermore, the Nietzschean mind as presented here seems to be almost entirely abstracted from the living blood and flesh that was Friedrich Nietzsche the man—throughout its many pages, the book never really alludes to Nietzsche's own life which you would think is essential to a holistic understanding of the German philosopher. There is also nothing about Nietzsche's relation to the pressing issues of our present day and growing topics within Nietzsche scholarship (feminism, ecology, or posthumanism), which again seems like a missed opportunity in a book with the professed aim of showing the contemporary relevance of the Nietzschean mind and with ample space to explore these important issues.

These criticisms aside, however, it has to be said that Paul Katsafanas has assembled a collection of commentaries that bristles with analytical rigour and attempts valiantly to articulate *what Nietzsche really means* within his defining concepts of the will to power, the eternal return of the same, *amor fati*, and his revaluation of values—it is, for certain, in form and in context, much more weighted towards

07-Reviews.indd 139 5/12/21 3:36 PM

the Apollonian (Nietzsche in snapshot) than the Dionysian (the 'becoming' and evolution of Nietzsche's thought) and should please readers with a strong interest in the critical and forensic dissection of Nietzschean concepts.

The Sartrean Mind

Published two years later than *The Nietzschean Mind*, and with an even heftier word count, *The Sartrean Mind* provides an altogether different experience for the reader. To begin with, it is jointly edited and seems to benefit considerably from this—where the former casts out its net at a close range and catches many fish of the same kind, this book casts its net much wider and captures a dazzling and kaleidoscopic array of different marine creatures. The editorial range in this respect is significantly more diverse, scanning and surveying the Sartrean mind from many different angles and perspectives. Indeed, what *The Nietzschean Mind* lacks, this collection of essays generally provides in abundance. First of all, there is a strong concrete connection to Sartre's life. To begin the volume, Matthew Eshleman provides a succinct biographical sketch of Sartre that serves as a useful contextualisation for many of the essays that follow, which themselves span the full trajectory of his writings from his early phenomenological period to his final thoughts in *Hope Now* (there is, regrettably, no biographical detail or sketch of Nietzsche's life by contrast in *The Nietzschean Mind*, and neither is the full chronological span of his works covered). Although the collection has a strong focus on Sartre's philosophical works, other aspects of Sartre's oeuvre are not disregarded or left fallow. Craig Vasey's 'Sartre's fiction' surveys Sartre's literary output, Stuart Charmé's 'Existential psychoanalysis' offers a thoughtful and penetrating analysis of Sartre's shifting perspective on the Freudian Unconscious and psychoanalytical methods, Adrian van den Hoven's 'Sartre's conception of theater: Theory and practice' elaborates the writing and performances of Sartre's plays, while Sartre's writings on art are covered succinctly in Sophie Astier Vezon's 'Sartre and the arts' (Nietzsche's deep, abiding interest in and writings on music by contrast are barely even mentioned in *The Nietzschean Mind)*. Secondly, several essays provide a concrete contextualisation of his thought in relation to significant others — those who influenced him (Bruce Baugh 'French influences', David Sherman 'Sartre and his German influences', Adrian Mirvish ' Sartre and Gestalt psychology')—those who were contemporaneous (Florence Caeymaex and Grégory Cormann's 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty', Sharon Musset's 'Nature as threat and escape in the philosophies of

07-Reviews.indd 140 5/12/21 3:36 PM

Sartre and Beauvoir'—and those whom he in turn influenced (Lewis Gordon's 'Sartre in Black existentialism' and Bennetta Jules-Rosette's 'Recasting négritude'). This is far removed from *The Nietzschean Mind* that abstracts away from social and historical context in the elucidation of his philosophy—the Sartrean mind, as presented here, is very much enmeshed within the socio-historical field that his writings totalised and were in turn totalised by. However, the volume does not ignore analytic approaches to Sartre's philosophy, but includes a healthy selection of them, with a number of essays (e.g. Jonathan Webber's 'Sartre's phenomenological psychology of imagination', Peter Poellner's 'Sartre and meta-ethics', Manfred Frank and Gerhard Preyer's 'Sartre and contemporary philosophy of consciousness') that critically dissect Sartrean ideas and lucidly stake out positions in relation to Analytical thought.

There are many insightful approaches to outlining the contours of the Sartrean mind in this catholic collection and so it is difficult to single out individual essays, but Matthew Eshleman's 'On the structure and method in Being and Nothingness', Constance Mui's 'Intersubjectivity and "the look"', William Remley's 'Ethics of authenticity', Matthew Ally's 'The logics of the *Critique*', T. Storm Heter's 'Sartre and anarchism', Gail Linsenbard's 'Ethics as flourishing humanity', and Julien Murphy's '*Hope Now*' all struck a particularly impressive note in offering a fresh perspective on Sartre's ontology, ethics or politics.

Generally speaking, there has been no stone left unturned that might reveal some emergent or, indeed, deeply established trace of the Sartrean mind in this collection of essays. The editors in their preface express a regret that they weren't able to cover *every* single aspect of Sartre and every avenue of his thinking—an Augean task if ever there was one—but they've displayed Herculean virtues in approximating it. Even their professed lacunae (p.5), such as Sartre's analysis of Stalin and the period of his pragmatic alignment with the PCF, are still in good part dealt with illuminatingly elsewhere in the collection in Ronald Aronson's 'Existential Marxism', William McBride's 'Search for a method', and Eshleman's 'A sketch of Sartre's life'.

It is fair to say that Nietzsche most often gets a fairer treatment in contemporary philosophical conceptions than Sartre. Thanks mainly to the French poststructuralists who hailed Nietzsche as a philosopher of the future and as a postmodernist and post-anthropological progenitor, whilst arraigning Sartre for his complicity in the humanist subject, Sartre is (unjustly) left floundering behind the curve of contemporary relevance and consigned to past centuries. In these two volumes however, the reverse image comes to the fore—Nietzsche is

07-Reviews.indd 141 5/12/21 3:36 PM

largely frozen in analytical time whereas Sartre's thought is configured as a living, dialectical, emergent, developing, and thriving body of ideas with a resonant contemporary reverberation.

Nik Farrell Fox
University of Lincoln

Caleb Heldt, *Immanence and Illusion in Sartre's Ontology of Consciousness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) 195 pp., £64.99, ISBN 978-3-030-49552-7 (eBook)

In the introduction ('Prefatory Remarks', v-xxiii), this work purports to do three main things. First it wishes to fully detail Sartre's 'philosophy of conscious awareness' (viii). Second it wishes to challenge a 'standard view' (ix) of Sartrean scholarship, where the ego is only found on the reflective level, arguing that this 'does not mean that egological affectivity is not present and that egological *phenomena* do not affect conscious lived experience on the unreflective plane' (xv). Third, from these analyses, the work aims to finish with an admittedly implicit 'normative dimension' (viii), whereby 'egologically purified acts of consciousness' (ibid.) can lead to 'a project of genuine self-overcoming and self-aggrandizement' (ibid.). While the work certainly achieves the first, I think it falls short of the other two.

The work is broken up into six chapters. The first spells out the author's understanding of the main elements of Sartre's ontology, particularly in reference to Hegel. The second details the author's understanding and interpretation—bringing in many other philosophers—of the crucial Sartrean theme of 'pre-reflective consciousness', as well as one of the book's key concepts, adapted from phenomenology and a Sartrean idiosyncrasy, '(non-)thetic awareness'. The third chapter, the real conceptual pivot of the work, then shows how this awareness plays out in three key dimensions: perception and the world, the psyche, and our bodies. With such groundwork laid, the second half of the work, chapters four to six, expands and develops this conception in relation to temporality (chapter four), spatiality (chapter five), as well as some slightly more concrete applications, namely 'the conscious existent's capacity … for self-delusion, for organizing its personal past, and for self-overcoming and self-reformation' (xxxiv).

07-Reviews.indd 142 5/12/21 3:36 PM

Some of the work's strengths are its in-depth knowledge and exposition of *Being and Nothingness*, not least whole chapters and sections—above all on temporality and memory—that have not been sufficiently analysed in Sartrean scholarship. The role of memory in our personality—especially on the pre-reflective level—is a particularly fascinating, complex and important topic, and some inroads have been made here. There are also other more local contributions and insights, for instance explaining the 'virtuality' of the ego (cf., for instance: xii, 151); and there are moments (for instance: 76, 166) when the text does explicitly address the issue of 'egological activity' and influence on the pre-reflective level. However, after having gone through the work, I did not come out with a sense of understanding of the main points, and I will give my main reasons why.

Firstly, there are simply too many massive philosophers under study. The author laments other scholarship and says it is 'time to return to Sartre's texts themselves' (vi), but then often does anything but. Right from the first chapter, there is as much Hegel as Sartre; the second chapter contains quite extended analyses and mentions of philosophers as diverse as Descartes, Husserl, Michel Henry, Kant, Leibniz, and Malebranche, as well as Gestalt psychology; and later chapters bring yet more—Bachelard, Bergson, Deleuze; Hegel returns—into the fray. It is important to understand Sartre's diverse influences, but they often take up such space and detail that the reader gets lost with regard to what was supposed to be under focus.

Secondly (and this is a consequence of the first point), a work that claims to focus on Sartre's texts in order to resolve a difficult and worthy issue then imports and adopts a 'lexicon' that makes the already highly technical vocabulary of Sartre even more bewildering. One need only peruse the chapter and section titles to see a highly technical vocabulary (much of it Deleuzian, it seems) that casts the reader into a thick terminological soup which is hard to navigate, also because many of the technical terms used (e.g. 'totalization', 'de-totalization', and 're-totalization') are never really clarified.

Thirdly, even when it comes to Sartre's own concepts and terms, often they are adapted to suit the needs of the author, often to the detriment of clarity and accessibility. The standout case here is '(non-)thetic', which is a key idea for the book that takes a basic phenomenological distinction and willingly conflates it through a Sartrean idiosyncrasy of using parentheses. The author usually equates the meaning of 'non-thetic' with 'implicit' (cf., for instance: 27-28, 76, 166)—and if so, why not use the simpler term?—but then adds Sartrean parentheses in order to denote 'the no doubt idiomatic use … by which we mean

07-Reviews.indd 143 5/12/21 3:36 PM

the implicit multi-dimensional awareness which the conscious existent maintains of the world, the psyche, and the body (each of which, for Sartre, consists in a multiplicity of aspects) which will come to be seen as comprising the ground of the primary—and evanescent—phenomenon of explicit (i.e. thetic or positional) conscious attention' (xxx-xxxi). Longwinded and complex sentences and definitions like this are very common in the work, often leaving one at a loss as to why these elements were not explained in a more accessible and simple manner.

Bringing all of this together, it seems that if the author did want to argue more clearly and relatedly for egological activity on the pre-reflective level—an intriguing, important and far from clear idea in Sartre—I feel some of the main passages, ideas, and distinctions were missed and were actually replaced with much more complex and convoluted notions from other philosophers and adaptations of Sartre's already arduous terminology. Firstly, I do not understand why the book does not begin with Sartre's *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Secondly, I do not understand why relevant scholarship (for example: Miguens, Preyer, and Bravo (eds.) 2015; O'Shiel 2015; Renaudie 2013) was not at least considered, in order to show their main existing claims and where they might be lacking. Thirdly, I believe Sartre has passages, ideas, and distinctions that would have helped but that have been overlooked. The author does rightly emphasise the issues of memory and affectivity. However, I also think Sartre's idea of the 'circuit of selfness'; the basic distinction between 'self' (*soi*) and 'ego' (*je* and *moi*); as well as the role of others—something which the author discounts from the outset (xvi) but which is one place where Sartre explicitly says that the 'me' (*moi*) 'haunt[s] irreflective consciousness' (Sartre [1943] 2012: 299)—would have all been crucial, and even simpler, elements to introduce and analyse if one actually wanted to answer the question, *using* Sartre, as to how pre-reflective egology is always already active on the pre-reflective level.

Lacking these elements, I am afraid one is left with a hodgepodge that loses its own and the reader's way, and that moreover drops one off abruptly without any conclusion, not least with regard to any more explicit clarification of the 'normative dimension'. Generally the book seems more a type of philosophy—in the vein of Heidegger and Deleuze—that tries to *do* something creatively with the works and thinkers under focus. This is all well and good, and will be of interest to some. However, do not then claim it is doing something else.

Daniel O'Shiel
Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile

07-Reviews.indd 144 5/12/21 3:36 PM

Notes

Sofia Miguens, Gerhard Preyer and Clara Bravo Morando (eds.). *Pre-Reflective Consciousness: Sartre and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Daniel O'Shiel. 'Public egos: constructing a Sartrean theory of (inter)personal relations', *Continental Philosophy Review* 48(3), 2015: 273-296, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-015-9334-4.

Pierre-Jean Renaudie. 'Me, myself and I: Sartre and Husserl on elusiveness of the self', *Continental Philosophy Review* 46(1), 2013: 99-113, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-013-9243-3.

Jean-Paul Sartre. *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, [1943] 2012).

Francis Walsh, *En lisant, en s'écrivant*: *La drôle de guerre de Jean-Paul Sartre* (Paris: Garnier, 2020), 399 pp., 32€, ISBN 9782406099062 (paperback).

This is an important study of a key period in Jean-Paul Sartre's intellectual development, examining his experiences of mobilisation close to the Maginot line during the *Drôle de guerre* (Phoney War). An Army meteorologist, with minimal duties, he had acres of time to read, reflect and write on the nature of his existence. The book reinforces the view that, through exposure to wartime life with his fellow soldiers, displacement from his familiar Parisian intellectual habitat, and supremely his physical separation from Simone de Beauvoir, he made a series of discoveries about his relation to himself, to others, to '*historicité'*, and being 'en situation'. For Walsh, this time is crucial for his thinking in *L'Etre et le néant* (hereafter *EN*) and his later work as he grapples with the theme of '*engagement'*.

Walsh analyses Sartre's writing from September 1939 to June 1940 in *Cahiers d'une drôle de guerre* and his correspondence with Beauvoir, focusing on the relation between reading and '*l'écriture de soi'* (writing oneself). He emphasises Sartre's challenge to Husserl's phenomenology by distinguishing the intentionality of individual consciousness from the '*Moi*', underlining the impersonality of the subject based on pre-reflexive consciousness. This is central to his thesis. For Walsh, the decentring of the individual is achieved by '*lecture appropriative*', reading and reflection relating to others, perceiving the world *('lire l'autre et s'écrire'*) and constructing a philosophical and narrative identity in a process of constant movement and change.

07-Reviews.indd 145 5/12/21 3:36 PM

The first section provides a somewhat lengthy theoretical exposition of the hermeneutics of reading and writing oneself (distinguishing between '*sens*' and '*signification*'), drawing on the work of Ricoeur, Barthes, and Stanley Fish's notion of interpretative communities. All writing is a '*lieu de passage*'. In Sartre's case '*l'écrivant*' uses letters as a laboratory of writing *with* the other; absence is central; his notebooks seek to overcome his absence from himself. They are a response to the passing of time, a space for literary creation and a self-making rooted in the world. Sartre is discovering and defining his 'être-*dans-le-monde*'.

Texts are read in situation, but texts are also situated in communities of interpretation. The subjectivisation of reading is an interface between the subject and the resistance of the world that leads to self-understanding through contact with the other. Walsh follows Ricoeur in seeing narrative identity as a continuously created projective reading and writing of one's own life, which is unstable, always de-totalised and incomplete.

Section two begins the direct analysis of Sartre's activities, following his thoughts as he travels on the train from Ceintry to Marmoutier in Alsace. His physical journey is matched by a philosophical one. The mobilisation is a '*rupture*' from his apolitical life of teaching and writing. The challenges of war and the possibility of death, ironically, give him the freedom to read and write, once he has completed his minimal duties, and lead to a crisis of identity.

Walsh shows that this period leads to a metamorphosis, a *'mue'*. Sartre comes to see the biographical illusion of *La Nausée* and art as salvation, the reality of contingency, and leaves behind his desire for the divinity of ipseity. He begins his engagement with authenticity in situation, seeking to go beyond the '*Moi*'. In his notebooks, supplied in bulk by Beauvoir, he thinks and writes spontaneously against himself, against the '*Moi*', so that he can become '*autre*' (111). These contain material that appears in *EN* and *l'Age de Raison* and ideas on existential psychoanalysis. His lengthy letters to Beauvoir that maintain that living intellectual unity, overcoming and resisting death and absence, are an 'écriture-*soi*'.

His voracious reading, supplied by Beauvoir, (140 books in nine months) appropriatively seeks models in the writings of authors such as Faulkner and Dos Passos that are neither coherent nor totalising, texts that help him see things differently. His readings of Gide, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Green (both journals and novels), Stendhal and Flaubert, feed into them and his construction of identity. It is transactional and transformative reading and writing in situation, reflexive

07-Reviews.indd 146 5/12/21 3:36 PM

and subjectivising, putting 'le *néant*' at the centre, not literature for its own sake.

Keeping the narrative of the journey, section three foregrounds historicity: reading and writing in situation. Influenced by Heidegger and Kafka, Walsh depicts Sartre as trying to understand himself in a historicised world, yet seeking to retain the movement of his freedom. He abandons the idea of his destiny as a great writer and seeks to move towards the future freely, aware of his finiteness.

We can give some examples in which his dialectical engagement in his reading helps him write himself. Against Heidegger, he sees death as absurd; he rejects MacOrlan's idea of salvation through literature that was his previous view, whereas Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des hommes* points him towards more finite goals, enabling him to dispense with his idea of the '*Moi*', and understand the irreversible march of time (cf. *EN,* 591). Koestler's *Le testament espagnol* reinforces his movement from liberty in the face of death to liberty in situation, assuming his finitude. Critical of the purity of André Gide, he defines himself by reading against history as well as literature, for example, Jean Cassou's *Les Quarante-Huit* and his history of the revolutionary roots of bourgeois humanism which becomes a substitute religion. Sartre sees all forms of oppression arising from men trying to become God, and humanism as a flight from liberty, making Man a value rather than individuals taking responsibility for producing their own values. Further, he takes issue with Gide's religion of letters, later rejected in *Qu'est-ce que la literature*. Sartre's secular, anthropocentric transcendence of his being in the world creating values points forward clearly to *EN*. In fact it seems to be implied that, to some extent, *EN* is an abstract autobiography of Sartre's philosophical journey.

In Jules Romain's simultaneous technique in *Prélude à Verdun* and *Verdun* we see stylistic influences on *Le Sursis*. He engages with Paul Morand's *Fermé la nuit*, with Valery Larbaud's *Barnabooth*, and with literary history at the turn of the twentieth century, including the travel literature of Gide and Barrès, and Rauchning's critique of Nazism and its advocacy of the sacralisation of violence. Sartre, joint-reading with Beauvoir, further praises Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des hommes*, which sees the aircraft as an instrument of perception, a work exemplifying the importance of concrete action and having a *métier*. Saint-Exupéry is an example of a '*subjectivité engagée*' (258). For Walsh the synthesis of this subjectivity with the objectivity of the world is how the individual appropriates the lack at the heart of the subject. It is the key shape of Sartre's 'être-*dans-le-monde*'. Walsh's exposition shows Sartre's reading helping him possess the world.

07-Reviews.indd 147 5/12/21 3:36 PM

The final section on Ipseity considers the ongoing change brought about by reading and self-writing. Walsh notes that the term *projet originel* appears for the first time in an entry for 10 March 1940. Drawing on Heidegger and Kierkegaard's anguish, Sartre sees '*le néant*' as the appearance of liberty in the world. Kierkegaard's *projet originel* is the introduction of his subjectivity into philosophy, enabling him to escape history by historicising himself as '*l'universel singulier*' (283). These ideas are developed by his reading of Wilhelm II's biography. Walsh convincingly argues that Sartre's biographical/autobiographical philosophising enables him to develop his thought, appropriating it along with his literary reading and writing. The lengthy analysis of Wilhelm's *projet originel* describes his attempt to totalise himself in revenge against his mother, England, and his disability, desiring to be uncaused. In judging Wilhelm's *mauvaise foi*, Sartre determines his own transformation: the need to be the foundation of his own values. Walsh suggests that from March 1940, as far as his self-analysis through reading is concerned, Sartre develops interpretive categories and narrative themes such as divinity, paradise, fall, and quest that help him to model his transformation (302).

Absence is a key theme. Throughout, Beauvoir is present in her absence; Sartre's ideas develop through their co-reading, which leaves its mark on *EN*. It is Beauvoir's idea to read the biography of Heinrich Heine, which Walsh sees as the genesis of Sartre's thought in *Réflexions sur la question juive*. It is through such transactional reading of biographies before, during, and after the war that Walsh sees Sartre's transformation being completed.

An incident in a café inspires Sartre to develop the concept of '*conscience transcendentale*', a constant series of choices based on pre-reflexive consciousness later reflected in *EN*. Walsh studies the role of the imagination in absence in Sartre's reaction to Beauvoir's absence and in her novel *L'Invitée*, (then in preparation), influencing the Pierre section in *EN*. This leads to a lengthy and fascinating examination of the concept of the '*irréalisables*' at the heart of being, the impossible absolutes that are always absent: unseizable objects of reflexion that perpetually haunt the subject's world, such as '*l'être-en-soi-pour-soi*' (343). Their letter-writing brings a synthetic unity through their co-presence in their engagement with literature. In this collective thought, one understands oneself not as an *other*, but *with* the other and *from* the other. In intersubjectivity we are never free of the other.

The author sees Sartre's reflective interface of reading and self-writing, communally engaged with Beauvoir, as central to the develop-

07-Reviews.indd 148 5/12/21 3:36 PM

ment of the philosophy of liberty outlined in *EN*. Central to Sartre is transformation through literature, through the metamorphosis of language, thorough words which are penetrated by '*le néant*'. Having overcome the religiosity of his literary mandate (see *Les Mots*), the literary history accompanying this intellectual development is a laicisation of literature. Sartre, unlike Kierkegaard, does not want to be a literary Abraham with a mandate, but an Abraham who has made a universal and singular choice. Walsh places the question of God at the heart of his analysis here, as it was in Sartre's reading of Kafka and Kierkegaard. Sartre maintains liberty and '*le néant*' as the source of all values, the heart of existentialist ethics. His laicisation of Abraham, Kierkegaard, and Kafka underlines his sacrifice of the divine mandate as great author and the development of his being for others.

> *Et ce choix libre de sacrifier le Divin, c'est Sartre sacrifiant la liberté, l'origine, en espérant comme Abraham la regagner en triple: puisque l'origine est décentrée, Sartre sera, comme Gide découvrant dans sa singularité l'athéisme, le commencement de quelque chose en* étant *la fin de quelque chose, celle de la Littérature, de l'instruction des Grands hommes, du Temple, de Lui-Même (370).*

As author-reader in situation, not in abstraction, Sartre has found his project of liberty through his extensive responsive readings. That Walsh concludes his argument with this secularised Abraham is most striking. He is surely right to underline the centrality of Sartre's atheism and his loss of belief in a literary mandate as evidence of the disappearance of any form of overarching absolute from his life, and of his transformation, and as the key to his thought from this point on.

We have not had the scope to outline all of the themes of this study, but it is clear that *En lisant, en s'écrivant* illuminates that vital link period between Sartre's early work and his later movement towards social and political engagement. It is based on an extensive and detailed doctoral study, with all the thoroughness of coverage, and sometimes frequent repetition of key arguments, that that entails.

Walsh's mastery of the primary material of both Sartre and Beauvoir is clear, and the coverage of Sartre's reading extensive and wisely selected. Fascinating connections are opened up between the work of this period and the theoretical work of *EN*, and links to the more engaged writings during and after the war are well made. The thesis that Sartre writes himself and his understanding of himself through reading and his relation to the world is clear and convincing. The role of the interactions of reading, writing, discussion, and reflection stimulated by book and letter is fully expounded. Crucially, and in line with recent scholarship, he shows the absolutely central role that Beauvoir

07-Reviews.indd 149 5/12/21 3:36 PM

played during this period: absent in body but present in mind and heart, in reading, and in writing.

This is a book of impressive breadth, erudition, and insight which will repay careful study, will benefit both specialists and non-specialists, and will give rise to much fruitful discussion.

John Gillespie
Ulster University

07-Reviews.indd 150 5/12/21 3:36 PM