

# Editorial

All these questions, which refer us to a pure and not a necessary reflection, can find their reply only on the ethical plane. We shall devote to them a future work.' There are few more (in-)famous 'last words' than those with which Sartre concluded *Being and Nothingness* in 1943. The 'ethical question' continued to preoccupy Sartre, in one form or another, for the rest of his life, and has recently become a renewed focus for critical enquiry on the part of Sartrologues, with the publication in 1991 of *L'Espoir maintenant* and its subsequent translation into English. Sartre's search for an ethics on the basis of the ontology of *Being and Nothingness* is the subject of Douglas Smith's article on Sartre and the Gift. Sartre's engagement with the rich vein of anthropological reflection on the Gift – from Mauss through to Lévi-Strauss – has already been mapped by writers such as Howard Davies, but Smith builds on that work and extends it into a consideration of the paradoxical Sartrean logic of 'loser wins'. While there is no doubt that Sartre adopted a more pessimistic view of the social dynamics of exchange from the early 1950s, largely due to the increasing centrality of the concept of scarcity in his mature work, and the implicit negation of that concept in the Gift (that can only function in a context of 'surfeit'), Smith nonetheless detects a survival of the Gift model in Sartre's 'loser wins', where scarcity plays a 'homeostatic' role in that notoriously unstable dynamic.

The history of Sartre's thought very often takes the form of an account of its relation to that of other major thinkers of the twentieth century. The interlocutors in Smith's article are Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Georges Bataille; the emphasis in Guillermin de Lacoste's 'elucidation' of Sartre shifts from anthropology to psychoanalysis. Like the first piece in our volume, De Lacoste's article dialogues with previous work in the area, notably Josette Pacaly's magisterial *Sartre au miroir*. However, where Pacaly remained largely within a classical Freudian perspective, De Lacoste finds inspiration in the Lacanian reworking of the notion of sublimation. Pacaly demonstrated at length the insistence in Sartre's work of the anxiogenic figure of the phallic mother, threatening not so much

castration, as engulfment. Noting the similarity between Sartre's Oedipal anxieties and those of Freud's little Hans, De Lacoste argues that Sartre, too, followed the path of an 'atypical' resolution of the Oedipus complex. In the case of little Hans, whose analysis was left unfinished, this resolution remained merely potential; Sartre, however, was able to conduct a successful self-analysis that enabled him, eventually (in *Hope Now*), to sublimate the figure of the phallic mother by attributing to her the role of Universal Mother. It is at this point that De Lacoste's article overlaps interestingly with that of Smith: the *reciprocity* that Sartre always held to be the foundation of any possible ethics returns here in the perhaps unlikely guise of the first, mirroring, look exchanged between infant and mother. At the end of this lengthy 'elucidation'— that some no doubt may find reductive — one is, perhaps, left to reflect on the conundrum of thirty years' of 'philosophy in the world' that turns out to be nothing more (?) than a 'self-analysis'.

If the pages of *SSI* are a reliable barometer of critical preoccupations, Sartre would seem increasingly to be attracting attention in the world of 'anglophone' departments of philosophy. After the ingenious foray by Yiwei Zheng (*SSI* 7.1), Jonathan Webber here ventures into the dense undergrowth of Sartre's account of consciousness in *Being and Nothingness*. All of us who teach Sartre have at some point witnessed the puzzled looks on the faces of students who have just been informed that 'bad faith' is a lie told to oneself within the unity of a single consciousness. The puzzlement is occasionally articulated in the form of questions such as: 'but how is it possible to be both aware and not aware of the thing one is trying to conceal from oneself?' or 'how is it possible to be aware and not aware of the intention to deceive (oneself)?' Webber advances an answer to these paradoxes by revisiting Sartre's distinction betweenthetic and non-thetic awareness in the light of the notion of (non-) conceptual representational contents, a notion that is currently much debated in the circles of anglophone philosophy of mind. Does this signal an end to puzzlement? No doubt the debate will continue in the pages of *SSI*.

Since *SSI* is the principal forum for debate of matters Sartrean, it is fitting that the final article in our volume should be a supplement, or perhaps sequel, to Adrian van den Hoven's piece on 'Some of these days, you'll miss me honey' (*SSI*, 6.2). Using techniques of close textual reading, and enlisting the help of Bergson and Husserl, Deborah Evans delves into the autobiographical humus of Sartre's Jazz Age. Her reading of *La nausée* also demonstrates, for the first

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time, to my knowledge, the extent to which that novel is shot through with the indications of musical dynamics, as though Roquentin's writing really did express, at key moments, his desire that his very life should become the 'substance of the melody'.

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Finally, we must record, with sadness, the death of John Taylor, a long-time member of the editorial advisory committee of *SSI* and a well-known figure in Sartre studies in the United Kingdom.

*The Editors*