

COMPTES RENDUS

FERRY, LUC //ALAIN RENAUT. *Pourquoi nous ne sommes pas nietzscheens.* Paris: : Grasset, 1991. pp. 305.

This is a collection of essays on Nietzsche, often by very well known writers who have been deeply involved in the French Nietzsche discussion. To understand the nature and significance of his work, it is necessary to consider it against the background of the ongoing French debate about Nietzsche's theory. The French Nietzsche debate that began at the end of the last century, continued in desultory fashion until it was given a decisive jolt by Heidegger's two volume study of Nietzsche. In France, and as a result of Heidegger's influence, attention to Nietzsche, as well as to Freud and Marx, three thinkers that Ricoeur has called "the masters of suspicion," was linked to an attack on the values of the Enlightenment. This attack required a deconstruction of reason as a mere symptom to be understood in physiological, psychological, or economic terms, in short from an extrarational angle of vision.

The message of the present volume, stated in the title, "Why we are not Nietzscheans," is a collective effort to indicate why, other than the long enthusiasm for Nietzsche, it is not really possible to be Nietzschean, or a follower of Nietzsche. In the present French philosophical scene, the French Nietzsche is influenced by Derrida and his followers, including J.-L. Nancy and especially Sarah Kaufman, and even more so by Heidegger. It follows that to the extent that the authors reject the French view of Nietzsche they are also rejecting deconstruction, including the Derridean influence, as well as Heidegger's view. Beyond the discussion of Nietzsche, this volume represents an effort to emancipate oneself from Heidegger's main French representative, Derrida, and from Heidegger, still the main "French" philosopher in the postwar period.

The volume contains a preface and eight papers, printed in alphabetical order by author's name. There is no indication of the source of the papers or the affiliation of the various authors. Although the writers are often well known, they are not identified. The level of the contributions is uniformly good. All the writers are very well versed in Nietzsche's thought.

The preface, due to Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, states that for those who began in the 1960s, it was advisable to take a genealogical

approach in order to show that the claims of reason were merely symptomatic. But today, it is necessary to abandon deconstruction to return to reason. Since it is not viable to return to reason as absolute knowledge, it is necessary to think with Nietzsche against Nietzsche.

The first two essays, by Alain Boyer and André Comte-Sponville, are attacks on Nietzsche's thought itself. In "Hierarchy and Truth," Boyer contends that Nietzsche is obsessed with hierarchy. In passing, he dismisses most of Nietzsche's main concepts, including those of interest to Heidegger, as uninteresting (15). The discussion considers Nietzsche's view of science that Boyer criticizes as uninformed (17-21). He maintains that to leave religion behind is not to abandon value; and he affirms that we need to take a rationalist stance (31).

The paper by Comte-Sponville, whose first book was on Nietzsche, is called "The Brute, the Sophist, the Esthete: Art in the Service of Illusion." In the course of the discussion, he frequently comments on the view of Clement Rosset, a philosopher at the University of Nice. He begins by stating that every philosopher needs to come to grips with Nietzsche (39). Nietzsche's works are not so important; it is simply exaggerated to see in them the start of a new era (4). According to Comte-Sponville, Nietzsche is both theoretically and practically immoral (46). His thought is essentially racist (54). Any effort to pass this off as metaphysical, as Heidegger does, is erroneous (57). Nietzsche's pretended fidelity to life betrays the humanity of human beings (61, 64). In fact, Nietzsche's idea of truth is selfcontradictory (72). Nietzsche is finally an esthete who places art over truth (89). One cannot be a Nietzschean unless one prefers brutes, sophists, or esthetes (90).

Vincent Descombes, who teaches at Emory University and at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Pratiques, contributes a paper on "The French Interest in Nietzsche." He begins with a portrait of the typical French Nietzschean (102). For Descombes, French Nietzscheanism is incoherent (107). After discussion of the origins of this movement, he criticizes Deleuze's influential discussion of Nietzsche (120-126).

Ferry and Renaut, two well known young French anti-establishment figures, provide a paper entitled "What needs to be demonstrated is not worth much." They begin by noting that for Constant and Tocqueville, the essence of modern society is the emancipation from tradition (131). They see Nietzsche as a neo-traditionalist who criticizes modern democracy and provides an analogue of the traditional universe (133). For Nietzsche, only tradition and modernity is incoherent (148). The paper ends with a warning against abandoning argument in a return

to authority (149).

Robert Legros, a well known Belgian Hegel scholar and phenomenologist, contributes a thoughtful essay, "Nietzsche's metaphysics, but the critique of metaphysics leads to a disavowal of Nietzsche who finally accepts its distinctions (158). For Nietzsche, metaphysics concerns the essence of truth (159). His critique of metaphysics implies a separation of appearance and reality (170). But this critique is inconsistent in many ways since Nietzsche presupposes what he excludes (173, 184, 190). Hence, if we are Nietzschean we cannot be Nietzschean (193).

Philippe Raynaud, who has published a book on Max Weber, provides a paper on "Nietzsche as educator." For students of Raynaud's generation, Nietzsche offered a way to emancipate thought from "metaphysics" (197). Raynaud identifies three forms of French Nietzscheanism linked to the views of Deleuze, Foucault, and Nietzsche's impact on French culture (198-201). Nietzsche's critique of the Enlightenment is essentially irrational (211). Nietzsche provides a critique of modernity (214).

The paper by Pierre-Andre Taguieff, "The traditional paradigm: Horror of Modernity and Antiliberalism. Nietzsche's reactionary rhetorics," is the longest in the volume. Taguieff identifies modernity as the commitment to perpetual discussion and traditional antimodernism as opposed to liberal democracy (219). He sees Nietzsche as influencing an alternative to rightwing traditionalism due to Bonald and Donoso Cortes in the political voluntarism of nationalism, exemplified by Action Française (220). The paper begins with an analysis of antimodernism and the idea of decadence in virtue of which Nietzsche is a traditional thinker (220-230). This is followed by a summary of Nietzsche's attack on liberalism (230-237). Then there is a discussion of nihilism (238-246), followed by a summary of Nietzsche's attacks on dialectic (246-252), on modern mediocrity and liberal degeneration (252-256), and cultural decadence (256-263). Taguieff notes that for Nietzsche, discussion is a sign of weakness (264). The paper ends with an account of Nietzsche and Action Française, a rightwing catholic monarchist movement (276-284). The treatment of parallels between Nietzsche's thought and his influence on the thought of various rightwing movements is very interesting.

SARTRE AND EXISTENTIALISM: PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, ETHICS, THE PSYCHE, LITERATURE, AND AESTHETICS. Edited with introduction by William L. McBride. 8 vol. New York: Garland Publishing, 1997. ISBN 0-8153-2440-5.

For the quarter-century following World War II, existentialism was a pervasive current of thought worldwide, not only in philosophy, but also in literature and in much of psychological and social theory. Jean-Paul Sartre was the towering, controversial figure who gave impetus to the movement and with whom existentialism was identified. Sartre's philosophy, which evolved considerably over more than three decades, continues to generate attention today.

This collection begins with contemporary articles that recapture the atmosphere in which the idea of existentialism crystallized. It presents important comparative and background studies that establish connections between Sartre and existentialist writers who preceded him, and offers some of the best scholarship on his writing, including posthumous publications. The articles also connect Sartre's philosophy with the work of his best-known French contemporaries and associates, notably Camus, de Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty, and with major post-existentialist intellectual currents.

While presenting Sartre as a philosopher, as he saw himself, this interdisciplinary collection of articles includes both comprehensive overview of his philosophy and in-depth analysis of it, some highly sympathetic and some highly critical. Because of its interdisciplinary character and its chronological range over more than half a century, this series is an exceptionally valuable resource for scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

This collection of outstanding articles brings multiple perspectives to bear on existentialism and draws on a wider range of periodicals than even the largest library usually holds. Even if all the articles were available on campus, chances are that a student would have to track them down in several libraries and microfilm collections—providing, of course, that no journals were reserved for graduate students, out for binding, or simply missing. This convenient set saves students substantial time and effort by making available all the key articles in one reliable source.

Not only does the collection offer the best of contemporary articles, but it also includes important classics and seminal pieces. Thus a student can view in one place the historical evolution and advances in existentialist thought, as well as be informed about the latest

developments.

A distinguished authority in the field, William McBride has put together a balanced and well thought-out selection of the most significant works, accompanied by expert commentary. The series puts into the hands of students a selection of the best writings on existentialism that is convenient, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and ideal as a starting point for research. A general introduction gives important background information and outlines fundamental issues, current scholarship, and scholarly controversies. Introductions to individual volumes put the articles in context and draw attention to germinal ideas and major shifts in the field. After reading the material, even a beginning student will have an excellent grasp of the basics of the subject.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT AND MEANING OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY EXISTENTIALISM. 388 pp. ISBN 0-8153-2491-X.

This volume recaptures, through the writings of figures already well-known in the mid-1940s, the coming-to-consciousness of the existentialist movement, along with early disagreements concerning its significance. The articles present various critics' shifting views of that significance and the movement's standing over subsequent decades. Despite the centrality of Sartre's thought to existentialism, these selections offer interestingly diverse perceptions of his place within the existentialist pantheon, along with varied interpretations of both the historical origins and the future importance of existential philosophy.

2. EXISTENTIALIST BACKGROUND: KIERKEGAARD, DOSTOEVSKY, NIETZSCHE, JASPERS, HEIDEGGER. 402 PP. ISBN 0-8153-2402-8.

These essays explore the relationship to existentialism of some of Sartre's 19th-century predecessors and near-contemporaries. Some of the contributors clarify these issues through their disagreements with one another, while others analyze major affinities and differences between Sartre and other existentialists.

3. SARTRE'S LIFE, TIMES, AND VISIONS DU MONDE. 412 pp. ISBN 0-8153-2493-6.

These articles are organized to give a sense both of the original reception of Sartre in his own country, in the United States and

elsewhere, and of the evolution of his thought from the immediate postwar period up to his death in 1980. Writers from several disciplines review his life as he perceived it and as others saw it against the background of the Cold War and the other great historical developments of those years, in which Sartre played such a major intellectual role as commentator and critic. Complementing the underlying question of this volume: Who was Sartre? are the philosophical, historical, and literary issues addressed in a number of the articles: what answer is possible to such a question and what is the meaning of biography and autobiography.

4. EXISTENTIALIST ONTOLOGY AND HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS. 355 Pp. ISBN 0-8153-2494-4

The majority of the distinguished scholarly articles in this volume focus on Sartre's early philosophical work, which dealt first with imagination and the emotions, then with the critique of Husserl's notion of a transcendental ego, and finally with systematic ontology presented in his best-known book, *Being and Nothingness*. In addition, since his preoccupation with ontological questions and especially with the meaning of ego, self, and consciousness endured throughout his career, other essays discuss these themes in light of later developments both in Sartre's own thought and in the phenomenological, hermeneutic, and analytic traditions.

5. EXISTENTIALIST ETHICS. 318 Pp. ISBN 0-8153-2495-2

Ethics was Sartre's principal concern, beginning with his famous and complex treatment of "bad faith" in *Being and Nothingness*, and continuing through his massive posthumously-published *Notebooks for an Ethic* of the late 1940's and his mostly unpublished lecture notes that date back to 1964. This volume contains highly informed analysis of all of these materials and other Sartrean works on ethics, as well as interpretations emphasizing the confrontation of his ethical ideas with inauthenticity, sexism, and racism.

6. EXISTENTIALIST POLITICS AND POLITICAL THEORY. 371 Pp. ISBN 0-8153-2496-0

The publication of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in 1960 marked the culmination of Sartre's efforts, begun in his more occasional political writings in what became essentially his journal, *Les Temps*

Modernes, and developed more systematically in his important essay, *Search for a Method*, to forge links between existentialism and a non-orthodox version of Marxism with a view to developing a new philosophy of politics, society, and history and a new approach to the philosophy of the social sciences. The articles provide a wide-ranging, insightful exploration of Sartre's successes and failure in his domain.

7. EXISTENTIALIST LITERATURE AND AESTHETICS. 379 Pp.
ISBN 0-8153-2497-9

Most of Sartre's extensive works of and about literature—his fiction, his drama, his never-produced film script on Freud, and his extensive biographical studies of Genet and Flaubert—as well as theoretical questions about the genres and their relationship to philosophy, are here subjected to critical scrutiny by leading experts from both literature and philosophy. The essays illuminate Sartrean existentialism's contributions to bridging the gap between the two disciplines as well as that between existentialism and other recent approaches to literary criticism.

8. SARTRE'S FRENCH CONTEMPORARIES AND ENDURING INFLUENCES. 354 Pp. ISBN 0-8153-2498-7

This final volume examines Sartre's best-known philosophical contemporaries in France—Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Simone de Beauvoir—in terms of both their own philosophical insights and their relationship to Sartre's thought. The articles also offer some suggestive connections between Sartre's thought and subsequent developments in European philosophy, notably structuralism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. The comparatively recent nature of much of this scholarship is solid testimony to the enduring influence of Sartrean existentialism.

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LAMBLIN, BIANCA. *A Disgraceful Affair - Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Bianca Lamblin.* Translated by Julie Plovnik. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996. 184 Pp. ISBN 1-55553-251-9.

Under the editorship of Marilyn Yalon, these memoirs constitute one of the volumes in the series "Women's Life Writings from Around the World." *A Disgraceful Affair* was originally published in France in 1993 by the Editions Balland under the title of : *Mémoires d'une jeune fille dérangée*, a title inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's own memoirs, *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* which have been translated into English and published as *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*.

Lamblin's title projects two main ideas: first an "affair" and then a "disgrace." Altogether the title hints to the author's painful memories and wounds that have never fully healed. Françoise Sagan had already documented in *Un Certain Sourire*, published in 1956, the relationship between a young *POST*-World War II modern adolescent and an older married man whose wife was fully aware of the affair. In the end the "affair" became a mere thing of the adolescent's past. Bianca Lamblin's *A Disgraceful Affair*, published in 1996, describes a similar but *PRE*-World War II relationship which she had with the most notorious unmarried couple of the century, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre. However, in the end this "affair" resulted in a life-long haunting experience.

At the beginning of this review, it is important to remember that Sartre was the exponent of existentialism. As such he emphasized that "existence precedes essence" (the fact that a person "is versus "what" the person makes of himself/herself). In his café-lecture, "Existentialism is a humanism," he says that a person first exists and then makes of himself-/herself what he/she wants to be. It is also important to remember that Sartre said that man/woman was alone to do this. There was no God (Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Lamblin all claimed to be atheists) or set moral laws to guide a person. A person became a law unto himself/herself, and had to take responsibility for this.

As a Philosophy professor would say to his college students: "Existentialism is a philosophy of personal existence, synthesized in the free choice of one's own destiny." In other words: "I am the artist. I am the clay. What have I made of myself?" It is an optimistic philosophy because "who I am is related to who I am yet to become." Therefore, if Lamblin describes the "ménage à trois" as a "disgraceful affair, she has to assume some responsibility for it. She was young and immature at 17 when this all began, but even at 17 a person has to take charge of his/her

life. If we consider existentialism to be "a philosophy of personal existence, synthesized in the free choice of one's own destiny," she was a free person and through her free choice forged her own destiny.

A Disgraceful Affair consists of five parts: a foreword by Marilyn Yalom, scholar at Stanford University, followed by an introduction by Lamblin, and three chapters, "The Threesome," "The War," and "The Postwar years." There is no conclusion to echo the introduction. The last words of the memoirs are significant: "In the end, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir did me only wrong" [173].

In the four-page foreword, Marilyn Yalom clearly establishes the background of Bianca Lamblin's "memoirs." Lamblin was "seduced both intellectually and sexually," first by de Beauvoir, and then by Sartre [p.X].

In the twelve-page introduction, Lamblin explains the reason she decided to "recount what was a dramatic episode" of her life which she kept so secret from all others, except her husband and daughters. Lamblin decided to write *A Disgraceful Affair* after the appearance in 1992 of the translation of the 1983 French publication of *Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres, Witness to My Life or The Letters of Jean-Paul Sartre to Simone de Beauvoir 1926-1939*. The French text revealed thirteen letters addressed by Sartre to "Louise Vedrine," a footnote, provided by Simone de Beauvoir, indicates who "Vedrine was: "A friend of mine with whom Sartre started a liaison soon broken off by the war." Between 1983 and 1992 however, in spite of the fact that both Sartre and de Beauvoir made a solemn oath to Lamblin never to mention her by name in their letters or memoirs [134], the secret was revealed in 1990 with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir, a biography by an American scholar, Deidre Bair, who gives Lamblin's maiden name and married name in the index, thus revealing the pseudonym of "Louise Vedrine." Feeling profoundly betrayed, Lamblin decided to write her own story thus bearing witness to her own life.

From the introduction, the reader learns that Lamblin is a Polish Jew who came to France as an infant. Her father was a buyer of pearls and her mother was physically ill and spent years in a sanatorium away from her children. In 1931, at the age of ten, Lamblin entered the Lycée Molière in the affluent XVIth arrondissement of Paris. She was a gifted child. She played the piano so well that she spent two years at the International Conservatory of Music hoping to become a concert pianist. When she returned to the Lycée Molière, she had already read on her own the writings of George Sand, Anatole France, Alphonse Daudet, to name only a few authors. She had also delved into Joseph Bédier's version of *Tristan and Iseult*, as well as Denis de Rougemont's *Love in*

the Western World.

CHAPTER I: "The Threesome," takes us to the Fall of 1937, when as a high school student Bianca Lamblin, then 16, meets her 29 year-old philosophy professor, Simone de Beauvoir, at the Lycée Molière. The student and professor become friends in a relationship which lasted almost half a century, from 1937 to 1986, the year de Beauvoir died. What is a mystery to the reader is why after such an intimate and intense relationship, did de Beauvoir leave her literary legacy to her adopted daughter, Sylvie Le Bon, and not to Lamblin, her life long friend?

The reader is led to believe that Lamblin was part of a de Beauvoir and Sartre's experiment. In 1929, de Beauvoir and Sartre concluded a pact in which he "would seek out new experiences with other women or girls. Sartre and de Beauvoir also promised to tell each other all about each other's 'contingent' love affairs" [28]. One of the tangible results of such a pact became, ten years later, Sartre's writing a *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (Paris, 1939).

The curious reader who reads Lamblin's memoirs and Sartre's letters addressed concurrently to both, to Lamblin and to de Beauvoir (Castor/Beaver), and published in *Witness to my life*, cannot but experience a feeling of uneasiness about what is being disclosed, especially in view of the fact that two adults were dealing with a young student and toyed with her immature emotions. What is disheartening is Sartre's use of the same style and terms of endearment in letters to both women, written and sent simultaneously. It seems that Lamblin was trapped in a *Huis clos* situation under the gaze of two adults who "seemed to be a stone slab with two faces, a sort of Janus figures" [25].

CHAPTER II: "The War" reminds the reader of the film, *Les Misérables*, released in 1996, in which a Jewish family is running away from Paris to the countryside to hide in order to save their lives. Lamblin's family found refuge in Quimper, in Brittany. Because of her background, she seems much more mature in her understanding of the magnitude of the events than the intellectuals with whom she is dealing: "... one thing was certain: a Nazi victory would spell grave danger for the Jews. Neither Sartre nor de Beauvoir ever said a word about that" [58]. Lamblin attributes to de Beauvoir and Sartre a lack of understanding or "indifference" to this matter. They probably understood too well that being involved with a Jewish person could threaten their own freedom and literary pursuits. The March 21, 1941 decree, which revoked French nationality from Lamblin's family [97] and the German order to have the word "jew" stamped on red on their I.D. cards [102-103] presents a different situation of the threesome. It was easier for de Beauvoir and

Sartre to cut off their ties: "From the end of 1940 until the Liberation I remained completely cut off from them. They never worried about my fate or tried to get news of me" [59].

In CHAPTER III, "The Postwar Years," the reader enters the personal life of a Jewish family. It portrays an intellectual caught in the grips of History. The world for Lamblin is in disarray. However, the reader cannot help but be amazed at Bianca's accomplishments. It would be interesting to know how many of Lamblin's classmates from the Lycée Molière, having survived World War II, were planning, in 1945, for their "agregations" [133].

There is a definite sense of uniqueness about Lamblin, and also a personal need to belong. Recalling her years at the Sorbonne, she mentions three classmates, Jean Kanapa, Raoul Lévy and Bernard Lamblin (her future husband) and how they worked "as a team"; as to their professors, she says "we were Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir's offsprings!" [32] What she did not realize at the time is that de Beauvoir was extremely possessive and jealous of everything Sartre had written, including the few letters that Lamblin had not yet burned which reappeared posthumously in *Witness to my Life*. It is the reader's hope that with the publication of her memoirs, Lamblin will finally come to terms with herself and her view of the threesome.

The *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* (1958), by Simone de Beauvoir, and *Mémoires d'une jeune fille dérangée* (1963) are more autobiographies than mere "memoirs." They project the odyssey of the XXth-century woman molded into a new life. The first one becomes "independent" by her own means; the other seems to have let herself be molded by two craftsmen. Lamblin became a Professor of Philosophy and with her *Mémoires d'une jeune fille dérangée*, she also became a writer. Being a professor gave her the ability to be an "independent" woman, as her mother had wished [26], "not having to beg for money from a man." She married someone molded from the same school of thought, and she mingled with the brightest people of the publishing world of this century. It is not surprising then that she would have written an autobiography as well. Ultimately, because of her association with Sartre and de Beauvoir, she had the rare privilege to be able to write memoirs that people will want to read because they bring a real light on two people whose fame will never die. It is regrettable that the descriptive adjective "dérangée" in the French title, and the descriptive adjective "disgraceful" in the English translation, are associated with her "memoirs." The first one "dérangée" suggests someone who lost her mind as a result of this relationship. The second one casts a blame and moral

judgment on the affair. They both bring only negative vibrations to this life experience. This makes the reader wonder why Lamblin wrote this book. Surely there were similar situations experienced by other people. It is not clear whether she is actually blaming de Beauvoir and/or Sartre, but one thing is clear: Lamblin has to assume some of the blame of what took place and happened at different times. Sartre taught a philosophy of "absolute freedom;" it was to the person to decide what to do with his/her freedom. Ultimately, *A Disgraceful Affair* only describes what Simone de Beauvoir, Bianca Lamblin and Jean-Paul Sartre did with their freedom.

In conclusion, this reviewer wonders about the author's intent in writing this book. Maybe, at the time, this was the only way she could imagine to get rid of the "negative baggage" of this disgraceful affair in her life. It is doubtful that writing this book has helped Lamblin to get rid of the feelings she has for de Beauvoir and Sartre and the affair. Maybe her true feelings are of a love/hate nature? Finally, considering the number of pages in the book that are devoted to the actual "affair," this reviewer wonders whether Lamblin could have used a different source, such as a periodical article to write about it. There are a lot of interesting things written in *A Disgraceful Affair* that don't have to do directly with the "affair" as such, yet the reader remains very curious about her postwar so-called "friendship" with de Beauvoir and Sartre, or rather the intellectual attraction which survived the affair and kept her coming back to them for more. Is it possible that de Beauvoir was helping Lamblin to define herself?

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