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Cusset sometimes appears defensive when he criticizes the scholarly community for misreading or failing to appreciate Derrida or Foucault. Cusset's allegiances emerge perhaps most explicitly at the end of the work, when he laments the rise of an "isolated humanism" that, in taking over the French academy, has needlessly vilified and made obsolete anyone associated with *la pensée '68*.

It is interesting to speculate about the significance of Cusset's contribution in providing a text that comments on, as well as participates in, the ongoing global dissemination and recuperation of French-American theory. With this effort Cusset has made French theory accessible to the French. Yet, it is probably only when this book is translated into English that it will become a part of that multifaceted and changing body called "French Theory."

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Ronald Aronson, *Camus and Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel That Ended It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), x+291 pages.

***Sartre and Camus: A Historic Confrontation*, edited and translated by David A. Sprintzen and Adrian van den Hoven (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2004), 299 pages.**

With the publication of these two books, we have a timely coincidence. Taken together, these texts offer us new information and tools with which to understand what, in 1952, created international controversy—the decisive end to the friendship of two of post-war France's premier public intellectuals on the left. Until now, this event has attracted mostly irreconcilable and noisy polemics on both sides of the Atlantic. Ronald Aronson is surely correct that only after the arrival of new materials and, more importantly, the demise of the Cold War can we fairly assess the debates that rent asunder the famous relationship between Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The same Cold War that "finally

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forced a choice for or against Communism”—Camus choosing against, Sartre for—also made judicious assessment of their relationship difficult. Now that the Cold War has receded into what seems like a distant past, are the central arguments that ended their relationship worth revisiting for more than historical reasons? Would it not be a cruel irony if the historical vantage point that makes levelheaded evaluation possible, simultaneously deems it irrelevant?

Though Soviet-style Communism, with all its terror and lies, is a phenomenon of the past and today the world suffers increasingly under the domination of American-style capitalism, we are nonetheless faced with a choice reminiscent of Cold War blackmail. After all, you are either with ‘us’ or you are with the ‘terrorists.’ Questions concerning violence grip us today as they did then, and it would be a mistake to think that the central issues raised by the Camus-Sartre quarrel are of merely historical interest: Does non-violence remain complicit with the violence implicit in systematic, state-sponsored oppression? Is pre-meditated, organized violence ever a justified means to overcome systematic, state-sponsored oppression? Is violent revolution aimed at transforming society as a whole possible or even desirable? If the first victim of war, cold or otherwise, is truth, the second may well be a loss of complex analysis and of vision unimpaired by dogmatic ideological commitments.

For these maladies, Aronson offers a sorely needed antidote as he retells the Sartre-Camus story “without taking sides” (Aronson 7) and shows, to my mind successfully, that in the final analysis “each was half-right and half-wrong” (225). In order to accomplish this, Aronson employs a quasi-phenomenological method that puts the question “who won?” out of play. Rather than attempting to tally the scorecard, Aronson “appreciates the fundamental legitimacy” of each side (5). This allows him to unearth the tragedy of the relationship, while clarifying how both Camus and Sartre, in their ideological blindness, betrayed their highest values. In light of Aronson’s past, self-declared commitment to Sartrean existentialism (in his *Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World* [London: Verso, 1980], for example), this work moves beyond his early allegiance and shows that incautious evaluations which strongly side with either Camus or Sartre are likely to succumb to the same ideological blindness suffered by each thinker. Needless to say, there is much to recommend about Aronson’s approach.

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In fastidious detail, Aronson captures both the general contours and the particularities of the fraught relationship. More importantly, Aronson deepens our understanding of the Camus-Sartre relationship by providing an full picture that not only includes the early dynamic of their friendship, the love triangles and accompanying jealousies, important events, and, above all, their nearly antithetical ideological trajectories; but also assesses the impact of the break on their post-friendship writings. In doing so, he shows that the two remained in a tacit, mutually influential dialogue even after they no longer formally spoke to one another.

While some have questioned the depth of Sartre's and Camus' friendship before the break (see for example Russell Jacoby's review, "Accidental Friends" in *The Nation*, April 5, 2004), Aronson does a good job of showing that Camus had a rather profound impact on the evolution of Sartre's life from spectator to politically engaged actor. Camus presented Sartre with several opportunities, both during and after the Resistance, to write political essays for newspapers, and he offered an example of a politically engaged intellectual, a persona Sartre would pursue for the rest of his life. On the other hand, Camus sought to distance himself from Sartre, a task made difficult by the fact that the media tended to place the two thinkers in the same existentialist camp. Thus, while Sartre took Camus as something of a role model, Camus was constantly fighting to remain independent, "bristling whenever he was linked publicly with Sartre." As for the period following the break, Aronson shows that to make a complete assessment of the political dimension of their relationship during that time one must read Camus' masterpiece *The Fall* as a reply to Sartre's and Jeanson's *Les Temps modernes* attacks, and read Sartre's *The Condemned of Alton* as a reply to *The Fall*. Such a reading, Aronson suggests, reveals that, in the end, Sartre and Camus came to positions that were no longer "diametrically opposed." Sartre moved away from his 1950s political realism that, to put it in oversimplified terms, insisted that the ends justified the means, while Camus came to see that it was difficult if not impossible to keep one's hands morally clean by taking principled stances.

The most important element that fueled the break was the Cold War which led Sartre and Camus to take increasingly oppositional and eventually antithetical stances towards Communism. Here it should be noted that both men, on the heels

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of liberation, “aimed at strengthening the *non-Communist Left*” (65) and attempted to navigate a middle path between Communism and bourgeois liberalism. However, after Churchill’s famous 1946 “Iron Curtain” speech and the 1947 establishment of the Truman Doctrine followed by the Marshall Plan, the middle ground “disappeared” and “finally forced a choice for or against Communism.” Camus’ break with the Communist Party in Algeria marked the beginning of a trajectory that culminated in his equating of Marxism with a justification of murder—a position he argued for in *L’Homme révolté*. During this time Camus was also influenced by his friendship with the fervent anti-communist Arthur Koestler and by the revelations of Stalin’s brutal crimes. In contrast, Sartre was never a card-carrying member of the PCF and, after the war, he was seen as an enemy by the PCF. Despite this, Sartre increasingly incorporated Marxist thought into his writings and developed sympathies towards and an eventual, if temporary, alignment with communism. This process crystallized with the 1952 arrest of the leader of the PCF, Jacques Duclos, on absurdly contrived charges—an event that motivated Sartre’s “conversion” and incited his well-known statement that “an anti-Communist is a dog.” Thus, as Camus came to equate Communism with murder, Sartre developed a violently anti-anti-Communism.

Sartre’s and Camus’ diverging trajectories over Communism clashed in the events around the publication, review, replies, and rebuttals that centered on, but really went well beyond, Camus’ *L’Homme révolté*. We can now thank David Sprintzen and Adrian van den Hoven for their exemplary translations of the hitherto untranslated essays that made up this heated exchange in the pages of *Les Temps modernes*: the almost wholly negative review of *L’Homme révolté* by Sartre’s protégé Francis Jeanson; Camus’ vitriolic but wounded reply; Sartre’s acerbic and Jeanson’s incendiary rebuttals, and Camus’ posthumously published defense. These essays contain the last words that Sartre and Camus explicitly, though often obliquely, directed towards one another. But the exchange presents the mere tip of an iceberg, if one will excuse this well-worn cliché. The accompanying materials in the book, including a Preface by Sprintzen and a “Historical and Critical Introduction” co-authored by Sprintzen, Salam Hawa, Bernard Murchland, and Adrian van den Hoven, help one to peer beneath the surface of these debates. The Introduction covers, in greater detail, the material discussed in

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the Preface, which makes some of the prefatory material a bit redundant—both primarily cover the pre-break period, though in less detail than Aronson. The collection ends with two well-written critical essays, one by William McBride that thoughtfully and cautiously sides with Sartre and the other by Jeffery Isaac that makes a case for Camus. When these two essays are read against Aronson, it makes for an interesting but somewhat unwieldy comparison, given that they are not in direct dialogue with one another. Nevertheless, the two books, when taken together, facilitate a balanced assessment of the relationship.

McBride's artfully written essay, "After a Lot More History has Taken Place," was not originally written for the collection, and Isaac's essay, "The Camus-Sartre Controversy," does not meet McBride head on. For instance, both McBride (Sprintzen 241–43) and Aronson (Aronson 92–93) claim, contra Sprintzen (Sprintzen 10, 12, 13), that Camus was committed, at least in *L'Homme révolté*, to the transcendental claim that certain values lie outside of history. (Isaac does not address this issue, nor is there any necessity that he should—there is just too much ground to cover in an essay-length discussion.) McBride recognizes that this reading of Camus may seem unorthodox, since Camus' earlier work, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, rejects such values. However, McBride rightly points out that Camus' work evolves and that by *L'Homme révolté* Camus clearly maintains ahistorical values—as well, we might add, as a strong view of human nature that must have seemed as unsophisticated then as it does now.

Although Camus was, in many ways, not as philosophically perspicacious as Sartre, and although Sartre has generally been viewed as victorious in this confrontation, most everyone agrees that Camus' political positions have aged more gracefully, especially in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of Communism. Camus' warnings against violent revolution, avoidance of broad principles, and his call for intellectuals to politically engage in specific rather than global ways all anticipate recent trends in thinking on the left. So, too, the sentiment he voiced during his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize—that it is dangerous to attempt to remake the world, and that the best we can do is to prevent its destruction—is likely to resonate with readers today. Indeed, as Isaac points out, Camus exhibited a noble courage in his efforts to remain independent of all political positions, and,

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unlike Sartre, he remained unwilling to “compromise his ethical impulses in the name of expediency or historical necessity” (Sprintzen 262). However, Isaac goes too far when he claims that “what remained constant were [Camus’] values, and he refused to debase them” (Sprintzen 263). For this refusal ironically collapsed upon itself in Camus’ approach to the war in Algeria.

As Aronson points out, “Camus’s vision of reconciliation between equals under the French Flag turned out to be a fantasy. It gave way before the either/or perceived by Sartre: French colonial violence would only be ended by FLN violence” (Aronson 209). Camus’ qualified non-violent stance and his effort to navigate an independent middle path was shrouded in ideological blindness—a point evidenced by his endorsement of the Lauriol Plan. The full details, complicated by Camus’ pied-noir roots, cannot here be given in full. Suffice it to say that the neocolonial Plan proposed to give both French and Arab communities autonomy, but only in matters that did not concern the other community’s interests. Issues of mutual interest were to be settled by the mainland French Assembly, albeit enlarged with Arab representatives. However, as Aronson concludes, “it was, of course, impossible to end colonialism and leave existing French rights intact, a fact Camus never faced” (Aronson 214).

Camus, of course, was not the only man suffering from blindness. Like Isaac, who champions the independent thinking of his man, McBride argues that while it is unsurprising that Sartre and Jeanson “often found themselves in agreement with large elements of the Party ‘line’; what is more remarkable is their success in remaining independent voices without being completely crushed” (Sprintzen 235). However, as in the case of Camus, independent thought did not spare Sartre from ideological bad faith. Aronson points out that two weeks before Sartre spoke at the World Peace Congress, Rudolf Slansky and other Czech Communist leaders were found guilty of treason on trumped up charges. The show trial led to eleven men being hanged in Prague. When Sartre was asked by the conservative leaning *Le Figaro* to send a telegram demanding the men be spared, Sartre replied, “refuse systematically to make any statement to *Le Figaro*” (Aronson 168). And, at the Congress, the irony that party-selected people from the East, who were prevented from open criticism of their governments, were to engage intellectuals from the West in open dialogue seemed lost on Sartre.

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To McBride and Isaac's credit, while both take sides, each, in his own way, makes cautionary remarks against declaring a winner. McBride reveals that as his philosophical sensibilities have evolved he has come to have more sympathy for the spirit, if not the letter, of Camus. In words well-worth heeding, McBride explains, "it is increasingly difficult for me to imagine, despite Marxian and Sartrean optimism, a conjunction of philosophical theory with political practice that will not result in debased, politicized philosophy instead of the hoped-for philosophical praxis" (Sprintzen 245). And at the very end of his essay he leaves the reader hanging with the question as to whether the end of Communism and Cold War politics validates the spirit of Camus. On the other hand, Isaac concludes that declaring Camus the winner would itself be contrary to the spirit of Camus. Besides, "such judgments are really beside the point" (Sprintzen 267). Rather than declaring winners and losers, we on the fractured 'left' have our work cut out and do better to learn from history's mistakes, which, in this case, includes the warning not to let our ideological commitments blind us to what we really value. In the end, anyone with a general interest in the history of the left or a particular interest in Sartre and Camus would do well read both of these works.

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Oona Ajzenstat (Eisenstadt), *Driven Back to the Text: The Premodern Sources of Levinas's Postmodernism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 388+ix pages.

Oona Eisenstadt's book addresses programmatically, authoritatively, and perceptively how Levinas's philosophical thought is informed at almost every turn by Jewish practices of discourse. Among readings of Levinas, such as those by Robert Gibbs and Richard A. Cohen, that have relied upon Jewish sources, particularly from the Rabbinic tradition, Eisenstadt's book is noteworthy for the comprehensiveness and clarity with which she sets out the question