

Being there for another

Our present from Sartre and Beauvoir

[presented by Max Deutscher at Blackheath 12 July 2008]

First Movement Enacting Scepticism and Constructing Dualism

Wishing to demonstrate that a certain possibility can at least be *thought*, Descartes *enacts* hyperbolic doubt – you know – I might be dreaming all this, a demon might deceive me, producing false appearances so that what I seem to sense might not be as I sense it – or what I seem to sense might not *be*, at all. From that doubt, there arose Descartes' famous *dualist* argument that one might represent thus:

About anything material, I can imagine a doubt.

About my own thinking existence I can raise no doubt.

So, my thinking existence is other than my material existence

But one Jean-Paul Sartre, and another, Simone de Beauvoir, about two hundred and forty years later, forged a response to that bifurcation of mind and body – they subverted a dualism that had seemed to flow from an intense philosophical analysis in the first person. About forty years after that response¹, Michèle Le Dœuff finally challenged Descartes to go further – not to be sensible and to forget his doubts,² but to take them to a further point on his hyperbole:

[Descartes'] philosophical scepticism [n]ever goe[s] so far as to wonder whether it is the tower that sees [the one who has been doubting its existence] (*Sex of Knowing*, 2003, 70).

That is to say, for Descartes, it '*sometimes happened that towers which had looked round at a distance looked square when close at hand*' (*Sixth Meditation*); at times he will suppose that he might be dreaming everything that seems real to him. Most extremely, he has imagined that a demon might make it appear that he is a living human body moving in a material and social world when in fact no such body and no such world existed. But, just as he never imagined that the tower might be looking at him and mocking his attempts to discern its shape, so too, within this most hyperbolic of his doubts it does not occur to him to examine what would be involved in his being looked at by the demon. How could the Demon be deceiving him about everything unless He can discern what he has made Descartes think and perceive? If the Demon *can* discern what he, Descartes, thinks and perceives, what might this mean about his bodily status? What could even the most powerful of Demons discern when it turned its attention to a perfectly immaterial being and pondered what it was thinking?

Descartes dared to create the seemingly unfalsifiable fantasy of being deceived at every thinkable point³. Still, following Le Dœuff's prompt, we realise that he does not think out what would be involved in his Demon *knowing*⁴ what he thinks and feels, and what he is misled to seem to sense. The thing is: if indeed he, Descartes, is a purely immaterial thinking being then this demon is unable to function as the ultimate spy – the successful spy must apprehend Descartes' every thought and misapprehension. And what of the status of the demon, itself, as a thinking being? Is Descartes thinking of Him as in some way *material* because real enough (within the frame of this enacted fantasy) to deceive him? Or must the Demon itself be *immaterial* because it must be a *thinking* thing in order to have its mischievous intentions?

And what of the status and powers of perception of that other Being that Descartes finally invokes to rescue him from his sceptical fix?⁵ Descartes is too accustomed to hearing about, and entertaining for himself, various notions of an all-knowing Being. It does not occur to him that his questioning of everything he has hitherto taken for granted brings into question the idea of knowledge itself. In attributing absolute knowledge to a Perfect Being he assumes an understanding of the knowledge such a Being might have. What is this 'knowing' whose existence is in doubt, but which he can so

easily imagine being held by a God, a Demon or himself, whether considering ‘clear and simple ideas’ or simply in being privy to Descartes’ thoughts and sensations?

The question becomes whether any Being can *know* rather than *imagine* what Descartes thinks, feels, or wonders. Can Descartes even fantasise coherently that it *knows* what he thinks and perceives? How? The demon overhears Descartes *speaking*? Looks over his shoulder as he writes? Is the Being whose existence Descartes constructs to supply the traction need to drag him free of his world of doubt even intelligible? Not even a Demon or God can know Descartes in the very self-intimacy of his thoughts if Descartes is, essentially, that *immaterial* being he thought he had demonstrated himself (and every other thinking being) to be.⁶

Second Movement These Chickens Come to Roost in the mid-Twentieth Century

Aided by reading Kant, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre renewed and transformed these Cartesian themes about certainty and the privacy of thought. For instance, during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and almost the whole of the first three decades of the next, Edmund Husserl worked to modify Descartes’ method of doubt, and challenged Descartes’ inference from the certainty of ‘*I think*’ to his distinction of mind as an ‘immaterial’ substance and body as a material one. For Husserl, as for Kant, it is the *phenomenon* (the object as it appears to us) that is of concern. This is available to us intersubjectively, as a common theme of agreement and correction. The phenomenon it is not some intrinsically private ‘idea’ or ‘impression’, nor is it the (supposedly) uninterpreted ‘sense-datum’ of empiricism and positivism. One’s perceiving of something is not intrinsically internal or private. Perception has its content and communicability in being ‘*as of a house burning down*’ or ‘*as of being pierced with a needle*’, and so on. Equally, the object that we perceive as real in itself, is an object of shared experience, whether technically unaided or as mediated by instruments and described theoretically. In describing what we sense as existing in itself nonetheless, that object is kept within a realm of interacting subjects.

Thus, Sartre can entitle *Being and Nothingness* (1943) as ‘*An Essay in Phenomeno-logical Ontology*’. In *The Second Sex* (1949) Beauvoir’s parallel enquiry into the phenomenology of sexual difference freely consults the various sciences and the social world as it is interpreted according to conventional sexual categories. Their enquiries emerge almost free of the theoretical dichotomy of idealism⁷ versus materialism.⁸ Sartre presents the theme of the subjectified object and objectified subject by use of the French verb ‘*néantir*’ that he invented.⁹ This is translated as ‘nihilate’ – ‘to make nothing of’. Being – what exists – ‘makes nothing of’ some other part of itself so as to become conscious and free. In common parlance, we become conscious of aspects of ourselves and of the world we live in by establishing an imaginative ‘distance’ from them. To ‘make nothing of’ is to ‘make light of’. We become conscious of something in our environment by ‘making light of some other part of it. We keep our friends by making light of their faults. Thus we remain conscious of what we like in them.

By recourse to this ‘nihilating’ posture that is one and the same with one’s making oneself free¹⁰, Sartre describes what it is to be conscious, and why the gesture of consciousness is (as he thought) identical with that of freedom. For Beauvoir, however, from the very beginning of their shared work on the concepts and claims of *Being and Nothingness*, full freedom was never guaranteed by consciousness. The freedom of one person was always already a function of what the freedom of others permits, encourages and discourages in us.¹¹ For all that Beauvoir stated on occasion that she came to ‘leave the philosophy to Sartre’, she developed an account of freedom as not absolute – a strikingly different and perhaps better account than Sartre’s. And yet, for all that important difference, there is an even more striking overlap in their theories of consciousness, freedom, and being for oneself and for another. The Other’s regard

and one's awareness of that is central to their account of us as conscious free beings.

They forestall Descartes' dualism even while accepting the richness and immediacy of a rigorous philosophy that dares to be written in terms of 'I'. They both build upon the fact that, by sense, I may experience how another senses and perceives me. Descartes himself, in one brief sentence in the midst of his doubts in the *Second Meditation* puts to himself the possibility that the 'I' that thinks might be the very body and brain whose existence 'I' can coherently question.¹² Beauvoir and Sartre go further. Exploiting the developments of Hegel and Husserl, they show that what thinks *must* be what can appear within the senses of another. The supposed privacy of thinking, sensing and feeling must be partly an illusion.¹³ And with this interweaving of privacy and publicity comes the undoing of a dualism of mind and body, of thinking and physical processes.

Third Movement Being Haunted by the Other

That I have my being as for another no less than as for myself withstands a doubt that may be reasonable and correct on some occasion – that what I take to be an attentive ear and eye of another is a figment of imagination or trick of technology. Though one's sense of being perceived by another is fallible, this is not to doubt its validity and immediacy. For, there is no infallibility, either, in one's perception of an object *purely as an object without interpretation of that object as being an experiencing subject*. The possibility of error still leaves intact the fact that the only adequate description of my perception is 'as of' the object that I took myself to perceive.

The phenomenon of being perceived in one's mentality is resilient. Indefeasibly, I learn that in being a particular version of a 'thing in itself' (a brainy body) I am someone for another – not only a something 'for myself' who is exclusively aware of and defining of what it is. And, in becoming aware that I can be perceived in the very mentality of my being (observably) in the world, I discover this 'being for others' as what I cannot shed. I cannot slip free from my observable being to leave it in the hands of another as some mere 'ragged cloak' (Sartre's phrase). This phenomenon of being perceived by another for what I am strikes a blow of the same force at Descartes' dualistically oriented enterprise. He has the idea of thinking¹⁴ as a process immediately present to him, beyond that doubt of his whether he has a body. This idea evokes the picture of thought and of sensory impressions as *immaterial* processes. As if commonsense and science concur that these processes are other than bodily conditions – merely *elicited* by them.

My being aware of another's perception of me as aware challenges the *division* between the mental as what another guesses at, and the physical as what they verify. The one who notices how I feel about what I see is placed not as *external*. In sensing how I sense things s/he offers me their regard as revealing part of what I am – for myself too. These mentalities that dualistic philosophy or personal conceit proclaimed 'immaterial' – the domain of my own incorrigible judgment – are exposed to the regard of another. The critique by Sartre and Beauvoir of the Cartesian stance reveals the character of thought as *bodily*. One may then proceed to explain the possibility of the inadvertent and the deliberately artful exposure of one's mentality.

Fourth Movement: Sartre's 'Other' and the 'I' of Descartes

For Sartre, the necessity in recognising the Other as the subject who is object of my experience is 'factual'. Descartes' 'I am' follows from 'I think', but his 'I am, I exist' is a statement, not an inference. It is 'true each time I utter or conceive it in my mind'.¹⁵ Sartre recognises a similar factuality in 'I am conscious of someone as aware of my consciousness' – from which I know my existence as for another – not only as for itself.

Since any existence is 'a contingent and irreducible fact' I can doubt whether anyone is there to 'look' at me, but I

cannot doubt my 'being as for another' as irreducible to 'being for myself'. My being has shifted irrevocably from 'being-for-myself' towards 'being-for-others'. Sartre's certainty about his 'Other' is not a certainty about a specific individual who may be appraising him. So too, Descartes' certainty concerning 'I think', 'I exist' is not about anyone in particular. Curiously, the charge of a 'ghostly' existence is also laid at Descartes' door.¹⁶ He does note, however, that he knows himself as bodily even in thinking the body away:

[I]t is I who have sensations, who perceive corporeal objects as it were by the senses. Thus, I am now seeing light, hearing a noise, feeling heat. These [may be] unreal, for I am asleep; but at least I seem to see, to hear, to be warmed (Descartes 1954: 71).

Thus, even within Cartesian doubt the world is given as material, and I am conscious of myself as if a body amongst others. I live in the possibility that I am this material existence. So, whatever doubt I may have about the reality of some particular 'Other', in a Sartrean world of being perceived by others my awareness of myself still is turned outwards towards them. The drama of Descartes' doubt made him forget his own (momentary) thought that he who doubts his body may be that very body. It falls to Beauvoir and Sartre to take the next step – to consider the Other regarding them as being conscious. This Other arrives within their world of sensation and this very sensation refers them beyond themselves to another centre of experience.

Sartre says that, all the same, I cannot represent the Other to myself (BN, 271), as if to say, '*I cannot be at the very place of the interiority that makes me an exteriority!*' That is not so bad. In representing the Other we do make an 'object' of them but still we receive a gift from the Other's position. I make the Other an 'object' but not uniquely 'my' object, and I can see the one who makes an 'object' of me being made an object by others. So the 'objectivity' that I accomplish makes relevant what others perceive and think about me. The other undoes the fantasy of my conscious being as peculiarly *mine*, for it is only as purely mine that it is 'denied me'.

Fifth Movement: Becoming a Couple – Possibilities and Limitations

[This section was not developed in the talk]

Sartre is making some headway. For the very reason that I cannot appropriate my objectification by others, objectification is a metamorphosis that undercuts solipsism:

If I could see myself as an object ... I should see ... the objective apprehension of my being-other, which is radically different from my being-for-myself, and which does not involve my point of view at all (BN, 273).

Sartre says that my 'being-other' is quite outside my way of seeing things. In so doing he exaggerates his own discoveries a little, as if to create a difficulty for his own position. It is part of good faith that I accept my facticity¹⁷ and therefore my being for another. He notices that despite our immediate experience of the regard of another, there are limits to intersubjectivity. Since I cannot grasp the other's perception of my facticity we must fail in our desire that we as a couple could exist as a 'totality' that each partner comprehends as if from outside it:

[T]here is this 'explosion' of the totality that is a kind of origin of the being of others and of myself as other as a kind of shattered totality, always elsewhere, never in-itself. ..

[S]imultaneously with my [consciousness as a negation of my mere facticity, the Other [negates] that he is me. The two negations are indispensable to being-for-others, and cannot be reunited by any synthesis (BN, 300).

It is indeed impossible that there be a 'reunion' that would unite us within a common consciousness that would encompass, explain and provide common terms for us. The impossibility signifies the intransigent difference of the Other even when we meet within the immediacy of two moments of consciousness:

One [cannot] understand the plurality of conscious beings [as if from the outside. The plurality] is inapprehensible because produced neither by the Other nor by myself nor by any intermediary' (BN, 300–1).

And yet, again, this is not so bad. The everyday character of the 'immediacy' of this encounter implies the 'bodied' character of living for oneself. That one conscious being does encounter another as such is a simple fact:

[S]ince there is nothing which can found it, neither a consciousness nor a totality exploding into consciousness, it appears as a pure irreducible contingency. This is the facticity of being-for-others (BN, 301).

Sartre has come to a terminus in describing the interiorised exteriority of the Other, but he has travelled some distance. Any other for whom I am a *being-for-another* must negate that s/he is me; the contingency of others must disrupt my self-centredness:

In one sense ... a plurality of consciousnesses cannot be a primary fact and it refers us to an original ... wrenching away from self, a fact of the mind. But in another sense ... this plurality seems to be irreducible [since] from the standpoint of ... the plurality [each and every consciousness in the plurality] vanishes. Then we can answer only 'That's how it is' (BN, 301).

Sixth Movement: Beauvoir's Revision of the Other

[This section was not developed in the talk]

There is a tension between Sartre's evocation of another's immediate perception of one's conscious acts and demeanour, and the gulf that is set up by the 'fact' that each, in observing the other, sees them as 'object'. If I am 'glued' within this metaphysics then the promise that the consciousness of each partner in a couple 'rises to the surface' of the body in sexual intimacy is particularly seductive. Beauvoir evokes love's generosity of spirit that permits each to be open to each – as subjective and as discerning bodies. Sartre too has his moment of lyrical metaphysics:

Whereas before being loved we felt our existence as a mere protuberance .. we now feel our existence to be taken up .. in its tiniest details by a .. freedom which .. we condition by our existence and which we freely will ourselves (BN, 371).

For Sartre, someone is *other* simply in being 'looked at'. But Beauvoir sets out from an opening declaration that history has shown that, finding it convenient to keep women in a state of dependency, men have always held the material power. From this point she establishes the 'look' of another within domains of power and of strategy. Far from an objectified 'Other' appearing as an inevitable consequence of anyone's regard of another, we read of the disastrous effect of particular (though widespread) errors. An attitude towards 'Nature' as something to be exploited becomes violent when worked out in relation to women:

[M]an's life is never abundance and quietude .. [since Nature either] appears as .. an obstacle and remains a stranger, or 'she' .. permits [him to take] possession of her only through consuming [and thus] destroying her. In both cases he remains alone; he is alone when he touches a stone, alone when he devours a fruit (SS, 171).

My life will never be one of simple 'abundance and quietude' sine I have need of others, who exist also for themselves:

There can be no presence of an other unless the other is also present in and for himself .. [T]rue alterity .. is that of a consciousness separate from mine and substantially identical with mine (SS, 171).

We have seen that, for Sartre, the frustration of encounter arises because the presence of another *as subjectivity* eludes his conceptual grasp. He admits a moment of love, however, when each accepts and regards the other as existing for itself *and* for the other. For it is the other who has achieved being for itself and for the one loved. Sartre offers too few alternative possibilities, however, to the project of love degenerating into sadism (making an object of the other)

or masochism (being an object for the other). Beauvoir manoeuvres around the impasse because she observes the mechanisms by which the other we need is turned into an Other who threatens us. Men give women the role of satisfying what both sexes need – an other who vindicates rather than threatens consciousness. ‘Woman’ is conjured out of the bodies of women – a renewable resource of living semblance of an impossible ideal of reciprocity, relied upon to confirm the consciousness of just one party to the contract:

This dream incarnated is precisely woman .. She [this fantasy of his] opposes him with neither the hostile silence of nature nor the hard requirement of a reciprocal relation; through a unique privilege she is a conscious being and yet it seems possible to possess her in the flesh. [Thus] there is a means for escaping that dialectic of master and slave which has its source in the reciprocity that exists between free beings (SS, 172).

Beauvoir’s critique of the ‘Other’ subverts this ‘feminine mystique’. Women are bulwarks against angst because men control the concepts:

The categories in which men think of the world are established from their point of view, as absolute; they misconceive reciprocity, here as everywhere. A mystery for man, woman is considered to be mysterious in essence (SS, 286).

She distinguishes this ‘mystique’ of woman as esoteric and yet ‘inessential’ from the fact that no conscious being can be fully grasped in its own consciousness. The use of women as ‘inessential Other’ is a function of economic no less than sexual power:

The feminine comrade, colleague, and associate are without mystery; on the other hand, if the vassal is male, if, in the eyes of a man or a woman who is older, or richer, a young man .. plays the role of inessential object, then he too becomes shrouded in mystery. And this uncovers for us a substructure under the feminine mystery which is economic in nature (SS, 286-7).

Beauvoir brings together her radical critique of these fantasies and the experience that seems to verify them. It is true of real particular women and men that their attempts at a free reciprocal relationship is threatened from within and from without:

In a way [the] source [of the myth] is in experience. [W]oman is other than man, and this is felt in desire, the embrace, love; but the real relation is one of reciprocity; as such it gives rise to authentic drama. Through eroticism, love, friendship, and their alternatives, deception, hate, rivalry, the relation is a struggle between conscious beings each of whom wishes to be essential, it is the mutual recognition of free beings who confirm one another’s freedom .. the transition from aversion to participation (SS, 283).

Despite these creative possibilities, the struggle leads men to box women in:

Woman is the absolute Other without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being (SS, 282-3).

For Sartre this objectification is written into the very business of being conscious of another conscious being. He does not ponder why ‘woman’ is a ‘mystery’ to man whereas to woman, man is ‘merely puzzling in his obtuseness’, as Beauvoir puts it. For her, the ‘mystery of woman’ is not simply a result of an objectification intrinsic to experience, but a specific capitulation to all that obstructs and occludes free reciprocity. There are reasons why this capitulation occurs, but the ‘making mystery’ of woman is as much cause of woman’s objectification as its effect. If there is a ‘mystery’ to woman beyond the fantasies, it is found in experience that does not depend upon a myth of woman in particular. It is the ‘mystery’ of being itself:

[W]oman is .. ‘mysterious as is all the world’ according to Maeterlinck. Each is subject only for himself; each can grasp in immanence only himself, alone: from this point of view the other is always a mystery (SS, 286).

Beauvoir proceeds to develop this sense in which existence itself is a ‘mystery’ that poses limits to our understanding.

This acceptance of a horizon that recedes as we approach motivates development of understanding, in fact. This salutary sense of something that always lies beyond one's grasp is exploited in 'men's eyes', appearing as a mystery for men about women. The actual, concrete understanding that is urgently required is perfectly feasible:

[T]he opacity of the self-knowing self, of the *pour-soi*, is denser in the other who is feminine; men are unable to penetrate her special experience through any working of sympathy: they are condemned to ignorance of the quality of woman's erotic pleasure, the discomfort of menstruation, and the pains of childbirth (SS, 286).

It is against the walls of race, power and prejudice that Beauvoir deflects Sartre's cry of a hopeless struggle against the mystification of the Other:

[T]here is mystery in the Black, the Yellow .. when considered as the inessential Other .. [T]he American citizen who baffles the European is not, however .. 'mysterious': one states that one does not understand him. Woman does not always 'understand' man, but there is no 'masculine mystery'. Mystery belongs to the slave .. Through .. religions, traditions, language, tales, songs, movies, the myths penetrate into .. [harsh] material realities [so that] everyone can sublim[ate] his drab experiences: deceived by the woman he loves, he declares that she is a crazy Womb .. still another enjoys his wife's company: behold, she is Harmony, Rest, the Good Earth! The taste for eternity is at a bargain; a pocket-sized absolute [to be] shared by a majority of men. The smallest emotion .. becomes the reflection of a timeless Idea (SS, 289-90).

The exposure of these myths as farce allows Beauvoir to look towards being free of them. This is neither an attack on 'poetry, adventure, happiness or dreaming', nor a puritanical attack on erotic love. Indeed, stories that are more creative may arise when the old myths disintegrate as woman find their place in public life:

[I]t may be disturbing to contemplate woman as at once a social personage and carnal prey. For a woman to hold some 'man's position' and be desirable at the same time has long been a subject for .. ribald joking; but the impropriety and the irony have become blunted, and .. a new form of eroticism is coming into being – perhaps it will give rise to new myths¹⁸ (SS, 290-91).

Beauvoir has observed the myths attending excessive expectations of sexual encounter, and has appealed to 'generosity' to break the cycle of submission and domination. Sartre himself, as we have observed, records a moment of delight when it appears that '*our existence is justified*', that each knows the other's '*secret of existence*' and, moreover, that each is more than content with that, and that the other should know of it. There are various reasons why Beauvoir has placed herself in a better position to take on the possibility of observing and relating to another without objectification. She has worked her way through Hegel more thoroughly than did Sartre. She takes on, not just as an *aporia* on which to place a signpost, Hegel's account of the conflict that arises between one being and another as each becomes aware of the other's consciousness. Then, travelling hopefully, she sets out to use Hegel's idea that the 'dominant' consciousness *needs* that of the one dominated. A conscious being has no option but to exist 'for others' as much as 'for himself'¹⁹ and his realisation of himself cannot have any validity greater than that of the observations and dealings others have with him. So he requires being involved with at least his equals, and, indeed, with others who have some qualities of perception and judgment that supplement his own deficiencies in those respects. In a 'free and reciprocal' relationship, if that can really exist, he will make his contribution in other respects of skill and perception.

Hegel's 'spirit' travels in a drama of discovery and disappointment in its ways of dealing with these necessities of reciprocity, but as if moving towards an absolute comprehension. For Beauvoir as for Sartre, such an absolute can be, at best, a temporary (perhaps useful) illusion that sustains exploration prior to disillusionment. They describe the tendency towards an absolute as the product of a failure to cope with a tension between two of life's demands. The need for self-confidence in one's consciousness of things is in conflict with one's equally important vulnerability to the consciousness of others. Life must be a struggle, since life must involve others and there can be no simple, harmonious and permanent

resolution of differences with them. Without the differences, others would not be ‘other’ and one’s existence as for others would remain unfulfilled.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ In *Being and Nothingness* and *The Second Sex* respectively

² This is what he did in the final, Sixth, Meditation. He supplies the commonsense replies to his doubts that, in the first two Meditations he showed to be powerless.

¹ For Descartes, a doubt about his own thinking existence lies beyond the realm of what is thinkable.

² Would the Demon sense or infer what Descartes thought and seemed to see? On what basis could an (immaterial?) Demon even guess at what might go on in Descartes’ immaterial mind?

³ In brief, Descartes argues that there is a God, and that this Good being would not allow him to be deceived where he had used his own faculties carefully, and within their limits.

¹ What if Descartes were material and God immaterial? How would God know what Descartes thought?

² For Berkeley, the object we sense is the sensory ideas we have of it. This ‘idealism’, stripped of Berkeley’s appeal to God as cause of these ideas would be better entitled ‘idea-ism’.

³ ‘Objectism’ strips the ‘real’ object of what we attribute to it from the sense-reactions that it induces.

⁴ Beauvoir’s corrective influence upon the Cartesian legacy is gained more from her close reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* than from Husserl, perhaps.

¹ Sartre’s ‘freedom’ is what used to be called ‘metaphysical’ rather than ‘political’. Subsequent to *Being and Nothingness* Sartre modified his vision of freedom as co-extensive with consciousness.

² See *Genre and Void: Looking Back at Sartre and Beauvoir*, ‘Bound to be Free’, particularly 60-61.

³ He does not refute the suggestion. He says that his interest at that stage is in what he cannot doubt.

⁴ This realisation can be stated within the framework of Descartes’ doubt, or of Husserl’s ‘bracketing’.

¹ ‘It seems to me that I see light and shade’, he says. Like thinking, this ‘seeming’ is immediate to him.

¹ (Descartes 1954: 67). Here, I offer my own expression of this ‘factual necessity’.

² Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind*. (See, particularly, the Introduction and Chapter One.)

¹ The resistance offered by my objectivity to what I would make of it.

¹ Perhaps, for the twenty-first century, the UK TV series, *Attachments* might be taken as exhibiting the sort of shift in sexual dynamics Beauvoir prophesied – exhibiting our contemporary mores as falling back into what she has lampooned.

² It is anachronistic – and hides the bias – to change Hegel’s ‘he’ to ‘he or she’.

References and sources:

This talk derives from interpretations and developments of themes in Sartre and Beauvoir to be found in my *Genre and Void: Looking back at Sartre and Beauvoir*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003.

References to ‘Descartes 1954’ are to *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, trans. Anscombe and Geach, Nelson 1954, republished 1962, and recently in paperback.

References to ‘BN’ are to pages of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel Barnes, published by Methuen 1958, republished 1976.

References to ‘SS’ are to pages of Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, translated by H.M. Parshley, published by Jonathon Cape, London, 1953, republished many times.

References of Gilbert Ryle’s *The Concept of Mind* are to the Hutchinson University Library 1949 edition, or as republished in Penguin paperback.

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