tives of racial violence, pleasure, and survival that people understand as constituting the public, however intimate or pathological that public might be" (63–64).

Cobb harbors no illusions about the fictional status of the strong religious language he recommends, language that does not "conform to the actual or accurate description of sexual orientation's lived experiences" (146). He realizes that this language of victimization is "a form of rhetorical shorthand," and he is well aware that such deceits are dangerous; however, as he notes, "Living without this shorthand is perhaps just as dangerous" (146). In God Hates Fags, then, Cobb makes an arresting argument for the necessity of sophistry. Sophistry is useful within regimes where dissent is not possible or where counter-arguments to the prevailing orthodoxy are not easily heard. I think we live in such a regime, and if that is so, it may be that Cobb is onto something important.


Reviewed by Julie K. Ward, Loyola University at Chicago

It might seem surprising to some to observe that two and a half decades after critics declared Simone de Beauvoir’s work excessively academic and out of step with current feminism, we should find ourselves in a period of flourishing Beauvoir studies. Much has changed since the period of the 1970s when graduate faculty in philosophy advised would-be Beauvoir scholars to study Sartre instead. To begin with, Sartre’s precedence and philosophical influence over Beauvoir have come increasingly under scrutiny in the 1990s, largely through the work of Beauvoir scholars such as Debra Bergoffen, Edward Fullbrook, Kate Fullbrook, Sonia Kruks, Eva Lundren-Gothlin, Margaret Simons, and Karen Vintges, to name a few leading voices. In general, this earlier, "second wave" of Beauvoir scholarship seeks to describe the unique
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correction of Beauvoir’s thought, in part by tracing its roots back to canonical philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, and Husserl, and in another by suggesting how the lines of philosophical influence may have run to, and not from, Sartre. The aforementioned works set the foundation for even more recent studies on specific aspects of Beauvoir’s thought, such as the development of her early ethics and its attendant notions of freedom, subjectivity, “lived experience,” and “situation.” (See, for example, works by Kristana Arp, Nancy Bauer, Eleanore Holveck, and Ursula Tidd.) In tandem with these recent, single-authored works, the last decade has also witnessed the publication of several excellent, critical anthologies on Beauvoir, including those by Claudia Card, Elizabeth Fallaize, and Margaret Simons, to name but a few. Finally, in regard to the most recent developments in Beauvoir studies, and that which should prove to be of great advantage to Beauvoir scholars, is after years of consultation and negotiation with Gallimard (the French publisher) and Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir (Beauvoir’s adopted daughter and literary executor), the full range of Beauvoir’s writing is going to appear under editorial management of Margaret Simons (Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville) and the University of Illinois Press. This multivolume work is to include, among other things, the extremely fascinating unpublished early diaries composed in 1926-27, as well as a host of newspaper essays, radio interviews, letters, and fresh, new translations of The Ethics of Ambiguity, and finally, a complete text of The Second Sex.

The present volume, Simone de Beauvoir’s Political Thinking, takes its place alongside the recent volumes and anthologies on Beauvoir’s work, yet it also offers something new. This work has a single central focus, as the title makes clear, one devoted to Beauvoir’s contribution to political analysis and engaged political action. There is breadth here as well, given that the six essays and co-authored introduction take up diverse strands in Beauvoir’s work, ranging from the less studied work (co-authored with Algerian lawyer, Gisèle Halimi) about the torture of a young Algerian woman, Djamila Boupacha, during the Algerian War, to her views about maternity, and more specifically, about her relationship to her own mother described in A Very Easy Death (Un Mort Tres Douce). Across the range of topics included, specific central themes unify the
present essays, all of which bear on the connection between Beauvoir's work and political analysis. So while Beauvoir's writing has not been easily identified with a single theoretical, political frame of analysis, such as Marxism or Socialism, what seems to characterize her work is her use of concrete, individual examples of lived oppression as a means of motivating her theorizing and her focus on situation. From the standpoint of philosophy, we might consider her approach as being analogous to induction, the process of moving from the particular toward the more general—what has been referred to as the "bottom-up" approach in philosophy of mind. Yet the analogy would be in some sense incorrect, for her approach is not inductive or empirical in the usual sense of the term. Rather, as Patricia Moynagh points out in her essay, "Beauvoir on Lived Reality, Exemplary Validity, and a Method for Political Thought," what Beauvoir is attempting to do by employing particular cases is something similar to Kant's use of the example as a means of illustrating a more general point where one lacks a prior rule of inference. In other words, as Hannah Arendt explains, we make use of the exemplary particular when we wish to show that something is "valid for more than one case" (qtd. in Moynagh 20). Moynagh's point is that Beauvoir employs the particular in her focus upon what she refers to as "lived experience" (l'expérience vecu), which stands as the methodological basis of Beauvoir's political thinking. By placing emphasis on the particular, Beauvoir insures that she does not engage in purely abstract theorizing, taking "flight from life itself" (qtd. in Moynagh 14), but remains cognizant of the individual and her specific situation.

In fact, it is the weight of the particular in relation to freedom that differentiates Beauvoir's and Sartre's conceptions of freedom. In a much quoted passage from Beauvoir's diary, The Prime of Life, she recounts how she and Sartre had differing views about the relation of the specific situation to one's freedom. Where Sartre seems to have maintained that each person has the same ontological freedom in any situation, Beauvoir insisted that not every situation allowed for freedom to the same extent: "What sort of transcendence could a woman shut up in a harem achieve?" (qtd. in Moynagh 15). Subsequently, in the diary passage, Beauvoir states that she began to move away from the supposition of a kind of abstract freedom that was universal, implying that what she wanted was a notion
of freedom that took into account the details of one’s situation. For it is in the details of someone’s specific situation that we see more clearly the extent to which the environment—from the informal practices of a society to its political regimes and laws—partly determines the freedom of the individual. Beauvoir may have been led to this conclusion by her own experience of what was entailed by being a woman, albeit a privileged, well-educated one, in early twentieth-century France. Thus, her growing appreciation of the particular situation, as well as a life-long experience of being female, conduced, Moynagh suggests, to Beauvoir’s choices when researching and composing *The Second Sex*.

The two factors, being female and being in *situation*, intersect with one another when Beauvoir experiences her freedom being constrained by a man’s perception of her as female: “My feminine status . . . is a given condition of my life, not an explanation of it,” she insists (qtd. in Moynagh 21). As Beauvoir explains, what she states in conversation with a man is dismissed on the grounds that it is said by a woman; she writes, “It would be out of the question to reply: ‘And you think the contrary because you are a man,’ for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity. A man is in the right in being a man; it is a woman who is in the wrong” (qtd. in Moynagh 21). In critically reflecting on her experiences as a woman, Beauvoir “sheds light on women’s condition in general” (Moynagh 21). And yet, we should hasten to add that it is not the abstract experience of femininity but the experience of a female subject herself that Beauvoir captures. She accomplishes this by her focus on “the lived body,” which is a perspective that is neither reducible to a biological determinism, nor one that ignores the physical mode we have of experiencing the world. In regard to her concept of “lived experience” and the body, Beauvoir draws on the phenomenological work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, yet she takes their ideas in a different direction by emphasizing the difference of women’s bodily experience. By making use of women’s actual, lived experience as the starting point of her theorizing, Beauvoir’s political thinking resists a Platonizing tendency to move toward the abstract and universal; through its lively attention to the particular, it retains a call to radical action.

Beauvoir’s focus on what she refers to as “situation” and “lived experience” is further elaborated in the themes of three further essays in
the volume, those by Sonia Kruks, Lori Jo Marso, and Emily Zakin. Zakin's essay, "Beauvoir's Unsettling of the Universal," disputes a standard reading of The Second Sex belonging to the first wave of Beauvoir scholarship that finds her work presupposing universal, often masculine, values for women. As Zakin notes, this kind of interpretation overlooks the extent to which Beauvoir was keenly aware of female difference. For example, Beauvoir remarks at the close of The Second Sex: "There will always be certain differences between man and woman: her eroticism, and therefore her sexual world, have a special form of their own and therefore cannot fail to engender a sensuality, a sensitivity, of a special nature." What Zakin correctly appraises within Beauvoir's thought concerns the extent to which Beauvoir actually undermines the notion of universal essences by her insistence upon female difference as a marker for experience. In this regard, the positioning of Beauvoir alongside humanist feminist thinkers, those for whom female emancipation presupposes a single, universal standard of values, is incorrect. As Zakin's wide-ranging exposition using The Second Sex, "Must We Burn Sade?" and The Ethics of Ambiguity together attempts to show, what motivates Beauvoir's analysis time and time again is how individual difference affects subjectivity. For this reason, Beauvoir does not wish to make universalistic pronouncements about subjective experience: maternity, for example, may be experienced either as alienating or as fulfilling—there is no one, single truth to uncover apart from the inherent ambiguity in the experience. As Zakin remarks about Beauvoir's treatment of maternity, she "neither extols nor demeans this experience, but reports on its inherent conflicts, all the while avoiding the tendency to mythologize" (47).

Lori Jo Marso's essay, "Beauvoir on Mothers, Daughters, and Political Coalitions," takes up the theme of motherhood in a more explicit way, attending both to Beauvoir's thoughts about maternity as well as her status as what we might consider "the mother of modern feminism." This appellation is, of course, somewhat paradoxical, considering that Beauvoir was not herself a biological mother nor did she frequently espouse ideas about the positive value of motherhood. And yet, here we must pause for some reflections. First, it may be noted that Beauvoir did adopt someone with whom she had a lasting relationship as a daughter, Sylvie Le Bon.
In addition, in her tribute to her mother, *A Very Easy Death*, Beauvoir accomplishes something quite novel: she re-creates the idea of motherhood by describing Françoise, her mother, as both a woman and a mother. In this way, she gives us the possibility of reimagining our relationships as women to our own mothers (Marso 80). The key to understanding what enables Beauvoir to achieve a level of comprehension and respect for her mother by the end of the work lies, in my estimation, in her direct experience of her mother’s illness: her shared confrontation with the doctors; her frustration of seeing her mother given repeated tests and pointless procedures; her witnessing the inevitable decline of her mother. All of this is recounted as she reflects upon her mother, a woman whose constraints and life experience made her “live against herself” as she learned to repress her desires and devalue her projects as she sought to become a good, middle-class wife and mother. Toward the final stages of the terminal illness, Beauvoir is careful to report that as her mother’s body became less and less her own, she continued to have physical enjoyments such as the pure, aesthetic experiences of color and light, enjoying the view of trees from her hospital window. By the end of the text, Beauvoir has revealed the extent to which she is genuinely moved by her mother’s dignified courage throughout the ordeal. So as I see it, this work, perhaps more than any other, reflects her most personal feelings about the depth and strength of the mother-daughter relationship.

Marso evaluates *A Very Easy Death* in a similar vein, understanding the text as showing, as well, how our freedom is affected by our situation as women, since Beauvoir recounts the many limitations imposed upon her mother as a woman. As Beauvoir tellingly remarks about her mother, “She lived against herself.” She goes on to explain how, “in her childhood her body, her heart and her mind had been squeezed into an armor of principles and prohibitions. She had been taught to pull the laces hard and tight herself. A full-blooded, spirited woman lived on inside her, but a stranger to herself, deformed and mutilated” (qtd. in Marso 83). In such circumstances, it might seem doubtful that Beauvoir should think it possible for women to move out of their situations and take action, and yet she does so. In her later writing, which was more directly political, Beauvoir conceives of women building coalitions in order to change what serves to limit their freedom, such as the lack of contraception, safe
abortion, maternal healthcare, adequate child care, and housing subsidies for mothers. As Marso notes, Beauvoir's writing about the many faces of women's oppression "calls us to see ourselves as part of a community of beings who are blocked on the path to freedom," and further, it "asks us to come together as a community seeking freedom" (85).

While it remains outside Marso's purview, Beauvoir's co-authored work supporting the cause of an Algerian woman activist during the Algerian war, Djamila Boupacha: The Story of the Torture of a Young Algerian Girl which Shocked French Liberal Opinion, attests to her later political involvement with women's conditions on an international scale. Gisèle Halimi, Djamila Boupacha's defense attorney, first approached Beauvoir for her assistance in gaining public recognition and support for Boupacha; Beauvoir, by writing a piece for Le Monde in June 1960 entitled, "In Defense of Djamila Boupacha," made the case a cause celebre of the Algerian War. As a result of the essay, copies of the newspaper in Algiers were seized by the French government as being dangerously anti-French, which immediately drew an international response of support for Boupacha's case; at the same time, Beauvoir began to receive death threats in Paris. So there is no doubt that the Algerian War radicalized her politics, and by the time of the publication of the book with Halimi in 1962, Beauvoir had developed an explicitly anti-colonialist, feminist, activist politics.

Karen Shelby and Mary Caputi take up Beauvoir's contribution to radical politics and, specifically, her involvement with the Algerian War and the Boupacha case in their essays in this volume. As Shelby explains, what Beauvoir develops at this time is the "notion of collective responsibility for actions with which many were not directly connected" (93) as she attempts to move French opinion away from the repressive actions of the French government in Algeria and toward the Algerian independence movement, or FLN. Shelby finds the philosophical roots to Beauvoir's radical politics of the later period in her early ethical work, The Ethics of Ambiguity, and her novel, The Blood of Others, which were originally published in 1946 and 1945, respectively. In her Ethics, Beauvoir sets out the argument that individual freedom rests upon the freedom of others, so that one cannot pursue the one in the absence of collective human
freedom. So Shelby is right in looking for the beginnings of an ethical theory here. As Beauvoir explains her ethics, "An ethics of ambiguity will be one which will refuse to deny *a priori* that separate existants can, at the same time, be bound to each other, that their individual freedoms can forge laws valid for all" (qtd. in Shelby 94). In the largely Kantian framework that *Ethics of Ambiguity* assumes, her discussion moves at a highly abstract level, showing that there should be a kind of metaphysical relationship between the two types of freedom. For example, if individual freedom is constrained by freedom of the many, then that freedom is unjust and should itself be constrained.

While Shelby does not make this point, I would suggest that there remains considerable distance between this abstract position about interrelated freedoms and the radical politics of the Boupacha case. In the introduction to the book about Boupacha, Beauvoir found it possible to say, regarding the use of torture in war, "The most scandalous aspect of any scandal is that one gets used to it... When the government of a country allows crimes to be committed in its name, every citizen thereby becomes a member of a collectively criminal nation. Can we allow our country to be so described?" (qtd. in Caputi 118). As Mary Caputi assesses Beauvoir's political involvement in the Algerian War in "Beauvoir and the Case of Djamila Boupacha," her activism is the natural result of a long-standing commitment to helping others who struggle against injustice. In this regard, it may be noted that Beauvoir's position about freedom differs from that of Sartre, according to which humans have the same kind of transcendence or freedom. Sonia Kruks describes Sartre's view as amounting to a kind of "radical individualism" that lends itself to "solipsism" (qtd. in Caputi 115). So where Sartre tends to see all players as equally situated in the arena of freedom, Beauvoir disputes this notion, finding that individual oppression negatively affects the subjective experience of freedom. As we have already noted, Beauvoir's view is more accommodating to the specific details of particular lives that, together with an abstract freedom, constitute the idea of the "lived experience" of freedom. In this regard, her ethical and political view is better able to make philosophical sense of the position of someone like Boupacha, who suffered various kinds of torture, including rape with a bottle, by the police questioning her. Caputi thus sides with Sonia Kruks,
who has written extensively on freedom and subjectivity, in positively evaluating Beauvoir’s views about situated freedom.

On a related theme, Kruks contributes an essay to this anthology, “Reading Beauvoir With and Against Foucault,” in which she argues that Beauvoir preserves a place for agency, ethics, and responsibility, even in the face of powerful external sources of discipline and control. Although Kruks does not take up Beauvoir’s involvement in the Boupacha case, the theme of her essay could be brought to bear in that period of her work, showing how Beauvoir’s analysis of women’s situation retains a place for individual resistance. Her essay also relates to another aspect of Caputi’s essay in which she raises the criticisms of Frantz Fanon and other French-Algerian intellectuals who questioned Beauvoir’s motives in supporting Boupacha, perhaps seeing it as another example of the patronizing relationship of the colonizers to the colonized, motivated by the desire to preserve French honor (Caputi 118). In this regard, Fanon’s skepticism toward liberal French intellectual support seems to reflect something of Foucault’s awareness about the insidious effects of power relations. More specifically, as Kruks has pointed out, for Foucault, none of our actions is innocent of power relations, and in this way, our actions may be complicit with the very sources of control that we seek to dislodge. However, as she also notes, the conclusion is not that we should refrain from acting in accordance with our values, fearing our complicity with power; rather, we must “make explicit the values implied by our actions, while recognizing our responsibility for the power effects they produce” (68).

In summary, this work contains several excellent, wide-ranging, but focused essays; although a slim volume, it provides us with much to think and rethink in relation to Beauvoir’s methodology, her ethics, and her eventual entrance into radical politics in the Algerian War period.

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