

INTERVIEW

Simone de Beauvoir, Analogy, Intersectionality, and Expanding Philosophy: An Interview with Kathryn Sophia Belle

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Abstract

In this interview with Kathryn Sophia Belle (formerly Kathryn T. Gines), Edward O'Byrn discusses Belle's publications from 2010–2017. His questions focus on Simone de Beauvoir and her use of analogy in *The Second Sex*, along with broader questions that engage Belle's work on existential philosophy, Beauvoir, Black feminism, and intersectionality.

O'Byrn: Kathryn, this is our second interview, this one based on my review of your publications from 2010–2017. In our first interview (for *Sartre Studies International*) I developed questions focusing on Jean-Paul Sartre, antiracism, and existential philosophy. In this interview I have developed related questions focusing on Simone de Beauvoir along with a few broader questions that engage your work in Black feminism and intersectionality.

Belle: Eddie, I want to thank you again for taking the time to engage my work so carefully and for generating these thoughtful questions. I am looking forward to continuing our previous conversation with an emphasis on Beauvoir and my critical engagements with *The Second Sex*.

EO: In your references to Penelope Deutscher's work on Beauvoir and Gunnar Myrdal, you note Beauvoir is a reader of Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (Belle 2017). More specifically, you underscore Deutscher's point that "Beauvoir does not examine G. Myrdal's references to the Black writers." Do you believe this was an oversight or maybe evidence of some kind of bias? In other pieces (for example, Belle 2011), you outline Beauvoir's negative reception of Wright's *The Outsider*, and her occlusion of Susanne Césaire and Paulette Nardal. When placed alongside Deutscher's point, it makes me wonder: Beyond Wright, were Black writers referenced by Beauvoir?

KSB: First, it is worth stating the obvious: *The Second Sex* (1949) is a massive text! Beauvoir initially set out to do a less ambitious project (something much shorter, like Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*), but she was inspired by the scope of Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem in Modern*

Democracy (G. Myrdal 1944) and decided to go for a more encyclopedic text that she refers to as her “essay on women” (Deutscher 2008, 80).¹ Sartre also frequently references this study in “Revolutionary Violence” (Sartre 1992), where he offers an analysis of oppression, racism, and slavery in the US. Second, it is worth noting the context in which we get a two-volume study like *An American Dilemma*. This text was published about a century after Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (Tocqueville 1835 and 1840), a study of prisons and democracy in America by a Frenchman. In the century between the texts, there were several groundbreaking studies of race and anti-Black racism in the US by major Black scholars—from the narratives and autobiographies of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Jacobs, to Anna Julia Cooper’s *A Voice from the South* (1892), to Ida B. Wells Barnett’s *Southern Horrors* (1892) and *The Red Record* (1895), to Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery* (1901) and *The Negro Problem: An African American Heritage Book* (1903), to W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) and *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935)—to name a few. All that to say, it is interesting that a white, Swedish economist was called upon by the Carnegie Foundation to give an account of “The Negro Problem” in the US context (the assumption being that this would make the study less biased). Having said that, Myrdal relied on Black scholars like Ralph Bunche (who contributed over 3,000 pages of research) to complete the massive study.

Getting back to Beauvoir, she clearly did a lot of research and covers a lot of ground in *The Second Sex*. Still, her lack of engagement with and references to Black writers can be interpreted as both an oversight and a general bias. She may have believed she had done well to cite Richard Wright and need not have cited other Black writers. Or perhaps Wright better served her purposes (in terms of the race/gender analogy, as she often references him when drawing comparisons between the racial oppression of Black men and the gender oppression of white women). In this sense it may be more of a bias in favor of Wright, whom she knew, rather than against other Black scholars. And yes, she does write some paternalistic things about Wright’s later novels. Beyond Wright, I can think of two other references to Black writers off the top of my head. Beauvoir references Léopold Senghor’s poetry in *The Second Sex*, and she mentions Frantz Fanon in her *Force of Circumstance* memoir. But I hope that I am wrong about that (that is, that there are others referenced that I am not remembering and/or that I am not aware of). One may argue that Beauvoir could not be expected to know the range of Black American writers and cite them in *The Second Sex*. But there are also Black writers in France who go unnoticed and uncited by her. Beauvoir does not reference Suzanne Césaire and the Nardal sisters (Paulette, Jane, and Andrée)—the often-erased co-founders of Negritude. *La Revue du monde noir* was collaboratively edited by the Nardal sisters (from Martinique) along with Léo Sajous (from Haiti), Clara Shepard (from the US), and Louis-Jean Finot.² Even before *La revue du monde noir*, there was *La Dépêche africaine* (1928–1932), a newspaper for which Paulette and Jane Nardal were also collaborators and contributors. About a decade after the launch of *La revue du monde noir*, Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, along with René Ménénil, co-founded the review *Tropiques* (1941–1945).³ All of these publications were circulating years before *The Second Sex*.

- EO: To quote Margaret Simons, Beauvoir's work in *The Second Sex* focuses "solely on the West, and more specifically France, dispensing with the rest of women's history in a footnote" (Simons 2002, 260). However, France's colonial and racial history seldom makes an appearance in Beauvoir's work, and it feels as if Beauvoir ignores France's history of abolition and antiblackness in their legal system. As you write about Beauvoir: "When she talks about American Blacks and American racists, she is not mentioning French Blacks and anti-Black racism among the French" (Belle 2014a, 266). Some of this is discussed by your former student Nathalie Nya in her book on Beauvoir: *Simone de Beauvoir and the Colonial Experience: Freedom, Violence, and Identity* (Nya 2019). Could you say a bit about the absences of Beauvoir's discussion of race as an issue connected to mainland and colonial France? Does this further prove your point about issues with her comparative/competing framework?
- KSB: I should note that my scholarship on Simone de Beauvoir focuses almost exclusively on *The Second Sex*. I have read and taught many of her essays and memoirs. But my publications have focused on this key text, mostly because I think it is the text that has been the most influential and that has received the most uptake—especially among white feminists and philosophers.

When we examine how Beauvoir takes up race and racism in *The Second Sex*, we see that much of her focus is on the US context. Of course, she visited the United States while she was working on *The Second Sex*, and her memoir *America Day by Day* chronicled her extended visit here. So that may account for some of her preoccupation with the US context. There is also a more general dynamic I have observed between Europe and the United States in which racism gets projected onto the US (as if there is not also racism in Europe) and colonialism gets projected onto Europe (as if the US is not also engaged in colonialism).

There is a simultaneous absence and presence of colonialism in *The Second Sex*. Beginning with the absence, Beauvoir does not explicitly name race as an issue connected to mainland and colonial France in *The Second Sex*. (In *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* Toril Moi asserts that Beauvoir is one of few scholars in France to take up and critique colonialism during her time [Moi 2008], but that critique came up mostly in the journal *Les Temps Modernes*.) We can also consider two examples of the presence of colonialism in *The Second Sex*. One example comes from the "Introduction" in *The Second Sex*. Presenting woman as "Other" from the very beginning, Beauvoir describes *Otherness* as an "original category" and *alterity* as a "fundamental category" of human thought (Beauvoir 1949, I, 16; 2010, 6). She offers several examples of *Others*: "For the native of a country inhabitants of other countries are viewed as 'foreigners'; Jews are the 'others' for anti-Semites, blacks for racist Americans, indigenous people for colonists, proletarians for the propertied classes" (Beauvoir 1949, I, 16; 2010, 6). So let us unpack this a bit. First, note that Beauvoir specifically names racist Americans and not French racists. In this description she also misses anti-Black racism and colonialism as overlapping forms of alterity and systems of oppression. Second, note that she presents women, "foreigners," Black people, Jewish people, indigenous (colonized) people, and proletarians *comparatively* as Others. Focusing on woman's situation alongside other categories of identity and oppression, Beauvoir makes the case that sexism (or what she calls "antifeminism") on the one hand, and racism, antisemitism, classism, slavery, and colonialism on

the other hand, are comparative systems of oppression. Third, note that later, when differentiating between women and other groups, she sets up competing frameworks of oppression, privileging gender difference in ways that suggest that woman's subordination is a more significant and constitutive form of oppression than racism, antisemitism, class oppression, slavery, and/or colonialism.

Another example of the presence of colonialism (though it is not named as colonialism) comes much later in the text in "The Independent Woman" chapter. Beauvoir references Richard Wright's *Black Boy* when she considers how the (white) woman can balance the tensions and contradictions confronting her. Comparing the situation of Black (men) from America and Black (men) from Africa with the situation of (white) women, Beauvoir states,

Richard Wright showed in *Black Boy* how blocked from the start the ambitions of a young American black man are and what a struggle he has to endure merely to raise himself to the level where whites begin to have problems; the blacks who came to France from Africa also have—within themselves as well as from the outside—difficulties similar to those encountered by women. (Beauvoir 1949, I, 2; 2010, 737)

This is one of the few instances when Beauvoir's focus on the race/gender analogy is not primarily on Black (men) in America, insofar as she also names Black (men) from Africa coming to France. And yes, these are all examples of my point about the problematics of Beauvoir's comparative and competing frameworks of oppression in *The Second Sex*.

EO: Following this line, your analysis of Beauvoir's slip between comparative and competing frameworks is quite compelling. Not only does it show how a comparative analysis of oppression fails to take seriously the specificity of contexts, but also how comparison often degrades into competition. Further, both frameworks fail to see nonanalogous, comparable, and overlapping oppressions (Belle 2014a). Is Beauvoir's slippage evidence for the need to adopt intersectional approaches to interlocking oppression? Could we extend this critique beyond Beauvoir to include those who take up her work? And perhaps this applies to contemporary antiracism and allyship organizing as well?

KSB: Yes, as you note, related to the comparative and competing frameworks of oppression is Beauvoir's analogical approach to analyzing various interlocking systems of oppression—specifically her reliance on the race/gender analogy and the slave/woman analogy in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir's comparative and competing frameworks of oppression pose at least two major problems: on the one hand, she collapses diverse systems of oppression as summarily the same (or at least similar), and on the other hand, she distinguishes between these systems of oppression in a way that privileges gender difference and oppression above other forms of identity and oppression. Additionally, her utilization of the race/gender analogy omits the experiences and oppressions of Black women and other women of color who experience racial and gender oppression simultaneously. Furthermore, her historical and metaphorical accounts of slavery do not adequately address racialized slavery or the material (not just metaphorical) experiences of the enslaved. All that to say, yes, there is a need to adopt approaches that address these gaps. One approach would be to take seriously

the notion of interlocking oppressions that we get from “The Combahee River Collective Statement” (1977) written by Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier. They explain, “The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are *interlocking*” (Taylor 2017, 15). They call for an integrated analysis and practice concerning the struggle against myriad interlocking oppressions. A second, related approach would be an intersectional approach. Of course, Kimberlé Crenshaw presented the term *intersectionality* in “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (Crenshaw 1989). She explains, “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, [therefore] any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw 1989, 140). And a third approach to consider would be the notion of intermeshed oppressions and the multiplicitous approach as theorized by Maria Lugones. For example, in “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,” Lugones describes intermeshed and enmeshed oppressions, historical enmeshing, beings enmeshed in the multiple, the desire to control others enmeshed in multiplicity, as well as the enmeshing of race, class, gender, culture, sexuality, and other differences as affecting and constituting identity (Lugones 1994).

Of course, some may protest that these concepts (interlocking oppressions, intersectionality, intermeshed oppressions, multiplicity) all came *after* the publication of *The Second Sex*. I have two replies to this protestation. First, there is a plethora of earlier iterations of these later concepts going back at least to Maria Stewart in 1831 and continuing with Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Ella Baker and Marvel Cook, Louise Thompson, Esther Cooper, and Claudia Jones—to name a few. Second, much of the secondary literature on Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*—published after the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s when we already have specific terms like *interlocking oppressions*, *intersectionality*, *intermeshed oppressions*, *multiplicity*—still neglect the import of these concepts for reading, analyzing, engaging, and critiquing *The Second Sex*.

As for *antiracism* and *allyship*, these terms have become popularized and somewhat depoliticized. Many of the aforementioned figures and texts have something to say about antiracism and allyship (even if they do not use those exact terms). And of course, there is also the notion of an antiracist racism that is attributed to Sartre, as well as the idea of using one’s privilege well (as Sonia Kruks puts it in her analysis of Beauvoir [Kruks 2005]).

EO: Your first critique of a race/gender analogy appears in one of your earliest publications (Belle 2010b). You provide a grounded and multifaceted exploration of the race/gender analogy as it is used in Sartre and Beauvoir as well as Wright’s complicity in-indifference to their usage of it. Why has it been so important for you to return to this question of a race/gender analogy in multiple pieces? In your view, can analogical thinking be productive or positive when thinking about oppression?

KSB: Yes, my first critique appears in my chapter in *Convergences*. I was struck by the analogy in both *The Second Sex* and Sartre's "The Respectful Prostitute." I have been aware of and bothered by the race/gender analogy going back at least to my undergraduate years—in part because it has been critiqued by Black women and other women of color for so long, and yet it continues to be deployed by white women (and men). So, part of the intention in returning to this problematic analogy it is to recover the long history of critiques, as well as more contemporary critiques of it by Black women and other women of color (for example, Deborah King, Patricia Hill Collins, Stephanie Rivera Berruz) and more general critiques by Kimberlé Crenshaw. There have also been white feminist critiques of this analogy in *The Second Sex* (for example, by Elizabeth Spelman, Margaret Simons, Penelope Deutscher, and Sabine Broeck) and more general critiques by Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr.

Collins distinguishes between analogies that present oppositional difference and relational difference. She explains,

A race/gender analogy framed within assumptions of oppositional difference would ask: how are racism and sexism alike and unlike one another? In contrast, a race/gender analogy framed within assumptions of relational difference would ask: what do comparisons of racism and sexism reveal not only about the separate systems but also about how they shape one another? (Collins 2017, 328)

She critically places Beauvoir's analogies in the former category of oppositional difference, noting, "Beauvoir's work . . . suggests an uncritical reliance on these analogies as shortcuts to build her case about oppression" (328). I remain suspicious of analogical analyses. I do not want to foreclose the possibility that analogies can be used positively, but I cannot think of any examples where these analogies have not resulted in a hierarchy of oppressions or the exploitation of one form of oppression in the interest of bringing attention to another (without any effort to remain mindful of and vigilant about the initial form of oppression to which the other form of oppression is compared). Again, the intersectional and multiplicitous approaches usually reject hierarchies while also being more intentionally attentive to multiple oppressions as interlocking and inseparable.

EO: In outlining the race/gender analogy, as deployed by Beauvoir and Alva Myrdal (Belle 2017), you name three general similarities: 1. Each equivocates about doctrines, theories, disciplines, paternalisms. 2. Each conflates and emphasizes stereotyping. 3. Each blends concerns about superiority and inferiority complexes present when discussing race and gender. How prevalent do you think these general kinds of equivocation, conflation, and blending are today? Is the race/gender analogy still commonly used in this way?

KSB: Yes, there are similarities between Beauvoir's analysis of race and gender oppression in *The Second Sex* and Alva Myrdal's earlier observations in "A Parallel to the Negro Problem" (A. Myrdal 1944). Both identify similarities between racial subordination of Black (men) and gender subordination of (white) women—specifically the use of doctrines, theories, and academic disciplines to prove the inferiority of both groups, the paternalism applied to both

groups, and the notion that both groups were expected to stay in their predetermined “place” in society. Also, both emphasize stereotypical representations of (white) women and Black (men). There are also some differences between them. For example, for A. Myrdal, the oppression of Black (men) is not unique because the oppression of (white) women has similar origins, ideologies, and consequences. Also A. Myrdal adds (contra G. Myrdal) that there is both a Negro problem and a women’s problem. But for Beauvoir, it is the (white) girl’s alterity (or the othering of gender oppression) that is not unique. And for Beauvoir (as for Wright, G. Myrdal, and Sartre), there is not a *Negro problem* or a *women’s problem*, rather there is a *white problem* and a *man problem*.

I continue to encounter equivocations, conflations, blendings, and analogies—not used in the same ways today, but in ways that still feel familiar—in the secondary literature that engages historically significant texts like *The Second Sex*, as well as in contemporary scholarship, and in ongoing public discourse. For example, much of the secondary literature on Beauvoir is written without regard for or citation of Black women and other women of color engagements with and critiques of *The Second Sex*, including critiques of the race/gender analogy. An example from contemporary scholarship that comes to mind (though this was published several years ago now and is not about *The Second Sex*) is Ladelle McWhorter’s *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (McWhorter 2009). On the one hand, McWhorter does not follow the lead of many other white feminists who use racism as an analogy for sexism without regard for the historical and contemporary significance of racism. On the other hand, I problematize McWhorter’s equating of heterosexism/sexual oppression with racism/racial oppression. (Belle 2010a) Although I am sympathetic to an argument that racism and sexual oppression are interlocking systems of oppression—systems of oppression that inform, impact, and reinforce one another, I reject the argument that the term *racism* is applicable to sexual oppression (specifically sexual oppression against white heterosexual women and white gay men and lesbian women). Two recent contemporary examples of equivocations, conflations (and I would add appropriations) in public protests and discourse include: 1) the ways in which Tarana Burke’s #MeToo movement got coopted and associated mostly with white women in Hollywood. And 2) the ways that Alicia Garza, Patisse Cullors, and Ayọ Tometi (formerly Opal Tometi)’s #BlackLivesMatter organizing was met with #AllLivesMatter and appropriated for #BlueLivesMatter.⁴

EO: After doing a literature review of your writings, I still find the section on Anna Julia Cooper in your early work (Belle 2010b) to be one of the most powerful ways to rebut the race/gender analogy. Your direct analysis of Cooper’s writings shows both how racial and gender struggles cannot be simply disaggregated, but also how this historical philosophical struggle is underappreciated by the field of philosophy. Along similar lines, in your 2014 “Race Women, Race Men and Early Expressions of Proto-Intersectionality, 1830s–1930s,” you contribute to and defend a historical lineage of Black feminist philosophies (Belle 2014b). Would you say that across your academic career you’ve always made space to emphasize Black intellectual history, especially Black feminist intellectual histories? Should we consider Cooper as well as other Black intellectuals and feminists to be philosophers?

- KSB: Anna Julia Cooper is among my very favorite philosophers. I was introduced to Cooper's writings in a feminist theory class with Beverly Guy-Sheftall as an undergraduate at Spelman College. Our main text for the course was her now-classic edited collection *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (Guy-Sheftall 1995) which included readings from Cooper's *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South* (Cooper 1892). In graduate school, my first conference presentation was a paper focused on Anna Julia Cooper. As you noted, she is part of a rich historical lineage of Black intellectuals in general, and Black feminist intellectuals in particular. I was fortunate to be saturated in this lineage and legacy as an undergraduate student at a historically Black, small liberal arts college for women. That educational experience, coupled with my upbringing, set a strong foundation for all of my work as a philosopher, scholar, teacher, and mother. So yes, I have always been very intentional in my emphasis on Black intellectual history, especially Black feminist intellectual histories. And yes, I approach Cooper and other Black intellectuals and feminists as philosophers. I often say if the Western philosophical canon wants to start with the pre-Socratic fragments (for example, Thales and water) and that "counts" as philosophy, then pretty much anything goes. Cooper and others have far greater philosophical insights than those offered by Thales and others in the Western philosophical canon. It is important to take these Black philosophical legacies seriously on their own terms as well as in conversation with philosophical traditions like ethics, social and political philosophy, epistemology, existential philosophy, and so on.
- EO: When it comes to Beauvoir, you argue, "My point is not that we should stop reading *The Second Sex*. Like any philosophical text, it has its insights and shortcomings that need to be examined. . . . By acknowledging and analyzing rather than apologizing for such shortcomings in the text, we are able to consider the serious implications they have for the insights offered" (Belle 2014a, 267). Although I agree with you, some people may find it difficult to square your critical arguments with your charitable stance. Of course, the efforts to canonize Beauvoir as a philosopher should not be undone. However, we—academic philosophers—need to hold ourselves accountable and admit to the mistakes of our most favored theorists. What does it mean to appreciate theory while implementing an immanent critique? And is this something typical for an existential approach to antiracism?
- KSB: The entire Western philosophical canon has all kinds of problems around racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, ageism, anthropocentrism, and so on. I have no interest in saving this canon or apologizing for its problems. But there are still lessons to be learned from these scholars and texts, even if only as examples of what not to do. Furthermore, we are acting in bad faith if we think we can altogether escape the Western philosophical canon. Many have taken theoretical frameworks from it and attempted to adapt them for liberatory purposes. Some reject this approach (consider Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" [Lorde 1984]). But even if you wanted to read African American/Africana philosophers exclusively, you are still always already engaging with the Western philosophical canon—in part because those figures are in the West and/or have been impacted by the West. The contact, impact, and influence of this canon shows up in the histories of slavery, colonialism, and neocolonialism as well as through the role that the

canon has played in shaping those histories and discourses about them. It also shows up in the scholarship of African American and Africana philosophical figures. For example, Amo is engaging Descartes, DuBois is engaging Herder, Anna Julia Cooper is engaging Emerson and Stowe, Fanon is engaging Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Angela Davis is engaging Hegel, and so on. You do not have to love the theory or even agree with it, but I find it helpful to be aware of it and to understand its ongoing impact in order to critique it and even surpass it. I do not think this is typical of or specific to existentialist approaches. For example, among African American and Africana philosophers, we also see this approach in the analytic tradition (for example, Charles Mills's and Kristie Dotson's work in epistemology).

EO: I like how you engage and reference those inspired by your 2014 Beauvoir scholarship (Belle 2017). The quote from Stephanie Rivera Berruz, and the conversation you open in response to Berruz, was a helpful display of productive and rigorous discourse. How can philosophers model this charitable and positive behavior through scholarship?

KSB: Thank you. Yes, I appreciate Berruz as an interlocutor on Beauvoir, the issue of analogies/dis-analogies, and the problem of the absences around Black women and other women of color in *The Second Sex*. She has engaged my work in critical ways that helped to push me to really flesh out the “and other women of color” part of my critiques of Beauvoir. She also offers her own analysis and critiques of Beauvoir and *The Second Sex* (Berruz 2016). Historically, and in my experience, Black and Latina feminists are often very intentional in citing one another's scholarship as well as engaging one another charitably and rigorously. I am intentional in taking that approach in my own scholarship. And I have benefited from others who do the same. Two examples of this come to mind: 1) Mariana Ortega's *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (Ortega 2016)—where she emphasizes the import of intersectionality for the project of the multiplicitous self, and 2) Emma Velez's “Decolonial Feminisms at the Intersection: A Critical Reflection on the Relationship between Decolonial Feminism and Intersectionality” (Velez 2019)—where she takes a both/and approach to decolonial feminisms and intersectionality. Ortega goes on to offer possibilities for “coalitional politics” and to propose that we engage in what she calls “praxis of intersectional philosophy.” For Ortega, coalitional politics has three key elements: 1) “an understanding that coalitional politics is both a matter of being/belonging as well as becoming, which includes location, being-with, and becoming-with that lead to transformation”; 2) “an attunement to the intersectional or intermeshed aspect of our identities or an understanding that the experience of multiplicitous selfhood is informed by the intersection of various axes of power”; and 3) “a recognition not only of shared oppression but resistant agency, which is dependent on what Lugones theorizes as ‘complex communication’ that can lead to ‘deep coalition’” (Ortega 2016, 163). To engage in the “praxis of intersectional philosophy” for Ortega is:

to practice philosophy in a way that is mindful of both how philosophical texts, traditional or contemporary, can be read in light of concerns related to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, nationality, and so

forth, and the way these are intermeshed or inform one another and in light of how philosophical texts intersect with texts from other disciplines. (218)

She elaborates:

Practicing intersectional philosophy would thus require us to read philosophical texts not merely to dissect them for the sake of knowing what Kant, Hegel, Arendt, Beauvoir, Fanon, and others said, but with both the diagnostic and constructionist projects in mind, with an attunement to how these texts can be connected to our current social world and how they can help us create new possibilities within our discipline and in the worlds in which we dwell. (219)

All of this also applies to the previous question about the Western philosophical canon and the role of critique.

EO: You frame your most recent work on Beauvoir as an exploration of influence, a literature review, and as a corrective to the erasure of Black feminist engagements with Beauvoir (Belle 2017). In the final section you detail the ways Black feminist scholars have taken up Beauvoir and the important criticisms they posit against her as well as white feminism's use of the race/gender analogy. Although this section is brief, it excellently maps these positions and previews a larger engagement around critical responses to Beauvoir. What are your plans for current or future research regarding Black feminism and Beauvoir?

KSB: I have two book projects in the works in this area. The first is my new book (currently under review with Oxford University Press) that offers an intervention in some of the exclusionary tendencies in *The Second Sex* and the replications of these exclusions in existing scholarship on that text. Black women and other women of color who explicitly take up Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* have remained largely unacknowledged in the secondary literature by white feminist philosophers (even those critical of Beauvoir along racial lines). I bring attention to this scholarship by Black women and other women of color published over six decades (1957–2018) including: Lorraine Hansberry, Angela Davis, Chikwenye Ogunyemi, Deborah King, Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, Mariana Ortega, Kathryn Sophia Belle [formerly Kathryn T. Gines], bell hooks, Kyoo Lee, Stephanie Rivera Berruz, Patricia Hill Collins, Janine Jones, and Alia Al-Saji—all of whom explicitly and directly engage *The Second Sex*. I also pay special attention to Claudia Jones and Audre Lorde, both of whom implicitly and indirectly engage that classic text. The second project is a companion to the first: an edited volume collecting the writings of the aforementioned Black women and other women of color who have engaged *The Second Sex*. No more excuses for not citing and engaging these brilliant women and their work on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*!

Notes

1 According to Deutscher, "The response to Myrdal is excited and identificatory. She is drawn to the breadth, multidisciplinary nature, and size of his project and states her attraction to the idea of being the object of that kind of extended intimacy with the reader" (Deutscher 2008, 80). As Beauvoir herself

notes in a letter to Nelson Algren, “I should like to write a book as important as this big one about Negroes” (80).

2 *La Revue du monde noir* was also circulated among and read by Black Americans in the United States including, for example, Anna Julia Cooper whose archived papers at Howard University’s Moorland-Springarn Center includes an original issue priced at 7 francs 50 or 30 cents US. The issue contains contributions including: “Race Equality” by Louis-Jean Finot, “The Creole Race” by Maître Jean-Louis, a poem by Claude McKay, and “A Negro Woman speaks at Cambridge and Geneva” by Paulette Nardal. This is just one example of the international connections and collaborations between Black women intellectuals throughout the African diaspora. Of course, these connections and collaborations were already evident insofar as Clara Shepard, a Black American woman fluent in English and French, served as one of the editors of the Review.

3 Surrealism has been emphasized in the writings of both Aimé and Suzanne Césaire (see Sharpley-Whiting 2002; 2003; Perina 2009, 1).

4 I should note that BLM is currently under scrutiny and has been critiqued for capitalistic gains from donations to the movement. (https://twitter.com/_rawilcox/status/1371995843683876865?s=21)

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