

Comparing Kant and Sartre

Also by Sorin Baiasu

KANT AND SARTRE: Re-discovering Critical Ethics

POLITICS AND METAPHYSICS IN KANT (co-edited with Sami Pihlström and Howard

Williams)

KANT ON PRACTICAL JUSTIFICATION: Interpretive Essays (co-edited with Mark Timmons)

Forthcoming Title

SINCERITY IN POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (co-edited with Sylvie Loriaux)

THE KANTIAN MIND (co-edited with Mark Timmons)

Comparing Kant and Sartre

Edited by

Sorin Baiasu Keele University, UK





Selection and editorial matter © Sorin Baiasu 2016 Individual chapters © Respective authors 2016 Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2016 978-1-137-45452-2

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2016 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-55673-1 ISBN 978-1-137-45453-9 (eBook) DOI 10.1057/9781137454539

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baiasu, Sorin.

Comparing Kant and Sartre / Sorin Baiasu, University of Keele, UK. pages cm

1. Kant, Immanuel, 1724–1804. 2. Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1905–1980. I. Title.

B2798.B25 2015 193—dc23

2015023919

In Memory

Doina Sabina Baiasu 1938–2015

Exemplary Mother, Selfless Friend, Inspiring Mentor

Contents

Lis	t of Contributors	ix
	Part I Introduction	
1	Kant and Sartre: Existentialism and Critical Philosophy Jonathan Head, Anna Tomaszewska, Jochen Bojanowski, Alberto Vanzo and Sorin Baiasu	3
	Part II Metaphysics	
2	Transcendental Unity of Apperception and Non-reflective Consciousness of Self Sorin Baiasu	21
3	Kant and Sartre on Temporality Daniel Herbert	45
4	Kant and Sartre: Psychology and Metaphysics: The Quiet Power of the Imaginary <i>Thomas R. Flynn</i>	62
5	Drawing on Sartre's Ontology to Interpret Kant's Notion of Freedom Christian Onof	77
	Part III Metaethics	
6	Self-Knowledge in Kant and Sartre Leslie Stevenson	115
7	Action, Value, and Autonomy: A Quasi-Sartrean View Peter Poellner	132
8	Kantian Radical Evil and Sartrean Bad Faith Justin Alam	158
9	The Pursuit of Happiness Michelle R. Darnell	176

Part IV Metaphilosophy

10	Sartre's Method: Philosophical Therapy or Transcendental		
	Argument?	197	
	Katherine Morris		
11	The Transcendental Idealisms of Kant and Sartre Richard E. Aquila	217	
Ind	ex	257	

List of Contributors

Justin Alam, English for Academic Purposes Tutor, Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies (CELFS), University of Bristol, UK

Richard E. Aquila, Professor, Associate Department Head and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Philosophy, The University of Tennessee, USA

Sorin Baiasu, Reader, Philosophy Programme Director and Chair of the Keele-Oxford-St Andrews Research Centre for Kantian Studies (KOSAK), Keele University, UK

Jochen Bojanowski, Faculty Member, Department of Philosophy, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Michelle R. Darnell, Lecturer, Department of Management, University of Florida, USA

Thomas R. Flynn, Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor, Department of Philosophy, Emory College of Arts and Sciences, USA

Jonathan Head, Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Politics, International Relations and Philosophy, Keele University, UK

Daniel Herbert, Department of Philosophy, The University of Sheffield, UK

Katherine Morris, Supernumerary Fellow in Philosophy, Mansfield College, University of Oxford, UK

Christian Onof, Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Birkbeck University of London, UK

Peter Poellner, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, UK

Leslie Stevenson, Honorary Reader, Department of Philosophy, University of St Andrews, UK

Anna Tomaszewska, Post-doctoral Researcher, Department of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, Poland

Alberto Vanzo, Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, UK

Part I Introduction

1

Kant and Sartre: Existentialism and Critical Philosophy

Jonathan Head, Anna Tomaszewska, Jochen Bojanowski, Alberto Vanzo and Sorin Baiasu

1 Kant and Sartre so far

Kant and Sartre are two of the most significant figures in modern philosophy, and yet there has, until very recently, been little comparative research undertaken on them. Despite dealing with many shared philosophical issues, they have traditionally been taken to be too opposed to each other to render any search for possible parallels between their works a useful enterprise. Indeed, Sartre is often taken to be one of Kant's most vocal critics in the literature, and as rather indebted to other major figures, such as Husserl and Heidegger. As a consequence, often, where comparative analysis has been done upon Kant and Sartre, the emphasis has been on their differences, rather than on their similarities. However, as recent research has begun to show, the story is not that straightforward and there is much to be explored with regard to parallels between Kant and Sartre. Baiasu (2003) has characterized Sartre's relation to Kant as one of an "anxiety of influence" - Sartre desires to explicitly distance himself from Kant, but this obscures some deeper underlying parallels between them.1 Such parallels can form a foundation for productive

Acknowledgement SB: Work on this chapter was carried out while an Honorary Guest Research Professor at the University of Vienna, as part of the ERC Advanced Research Project "Distortions of Normativity". I am grateful to the project's PI for making this possible.

¹ Howells (1988) originally made this point with regard to their respective positions on ethics, which Baiasu (2011) later expanded to cover wider aspects of their philosophies.

dialogue, more widely, between the schools of Kantian "Critical philosophy" and existentialism.²

Recent research has demonstrated the possibility of such a dialogue between the philosophies of Kant and Sartre. A natural starting point for comparative analysis of both philosophers is that of their ethical theories, which has sparked differences of opinion among scholars. Linsenbard (2007), for example, has argued that Sartre's use of Kantian notions (such as a principle of universalizability) masks more fundamental differences between the two that place them far apart:

[I]t would be a mistake, I think, to interpret Sartre's views on morality as 'Kantian' or as even marginally endorsing Kant's views. Indeed, Sartre's continuing preoccupation (one might even say 'obsession') with Kant suggests ... a path he did *not* wish to take with respect to the most promising moral terrain. (2007: 65)

Due to having radically different ethical theories, despite much talk of Kant and use of familiarly Kantian language, Sartre "cannot ... be interpreted as invoking Kant's meaning" (2007: 80). Painter (1999), on the other hand, finds deep similarities between Kant and Sartre on the questions of ethics, identifying a shared inheritance in the tradition of Protestant ethics. Describing Sartre's relationship with Kant as "flirtatious", he writes that

[b]oth find a common ground in a fundamental aspect of the Protestant ethic, characterized by Lutheranism and Calvinism, wherein the everyday takes on great moral significance, and great deeds, or high moral principles that direct actions based on the actualization of virtuous ends become hubristic, impious and immoral ... how we approach the simply given in life, the concrete everyday situation, has far more moral significance than any moral principle whose content defines what is right or what is wrong. (1999: 211)

Given this shared inheritance, we can see Sartre's use of Kant's language and various concepts as an opportunity to illuminate ethical insights from the Protestant ethical tradition, alongside his own idiosyncratic

² An example of such a dialogue can be seen in the work of Christine Korsgaard, who explicitly acknowledges her indebtedness to both Kant and Sartre. Whilst her work is more widely recognized as Kantian in spirit, nevertheless it also includes strong existentialist aspects.

developments, and Sartre himself as unable to escape from shared parallels with Kant on the question of ethics: "Sartre's critique of Kant's ethics, and his attempt to develop his own, burns down, like a crucible, the essence of both approaches: a secular Protestantism" (1999: 217).

As part of the project of a comparative analysis on Kant's and Sartre's ethical works, Sweeney (1985) has also noted that, in his short story "The Wall", Sartre uses examples similar to those of Kant's famous essay "On a Supposed Right to Lie From Philanthropy", which illuminate the ethical theses that he is attempting to illustrate through the narrative.³ We see, in this story, Sartre potentially using Kantian resources to argue against Husserl; as Sweeney writes, "Sartre seeks to argue against Husserl by presenting through his use of Kant's example a counter-example to Husserl's view" (1985: 15). Though, of course, this in itself does not show that Sartre is adopting a Kantian ethical theory, it does illustrate at least that he was aware of the philosophical resources made available to him by Kant for use in describing and elaborating his own ethical theory.

Lieberman (1997) has also added to this literature by comparing Kant and Sartre's accounts of freedom, particularly taking into account the impact that radical evil has upon freedom in Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason. An interesting parallel can perhaps be seen between the choice of a fundamental ethical disposition as an original act of will (which, as far as Kant is concerned, makes all human beings radically evil) and Sartre's notion of 'choosing oneself' - both are choices which are independent of the individual's environment, are "outside of time", and serve as an intelligible ground for individual choices, seeing them as part of a "total choice" (1997: 210–12).

However, Lieberman is keen to note that the parallels between Kant and Sartre on the notion of a kind of fundamental ethical choice only go so far; ultimately they differ insofar as "first, Sartre lacks the world view that accepts common (and perhaps unquestionable) knowledge of the moral law; and second, Sartre lacks the theoretical orientation in which an a priori awareness of the moral law is possible - in which a fact about our essence as rational beings precedes, or is at least independent of, our existence - thereby reversing the existential canon that existence precedes essence" (1997: 215). Nevertheless, he speaks of the comparative analysis of Kant and Sartre on this issue as "fruitful" in "revealing in the residue of analysis an historical trace that connects Kant to Sartre in some aspects of their thought", as well as "[bringing]

³ Though, Sweeney does allow that Sartre could have been inspired to use this example by Plato or Victor Hugo (1985: 16 n7).

to light fundamental problems within their theories and [suggesting] avenues of interpretation and possible solutions" (1997: 216).

Other recent research has focused on issues in the theoretical philosophies of Kant and Sartre. Deep parallels and dissimilarities have both been noted. As an example, Jopling (1986) has discussed their accounts of self-knowledge (a topic that will recur in this volume). A deep affinity can be found in the sense in which the attempt to gain self-knowledge, for both philosophers, is a very difficult endeavour indeed:

Kant and Sartre, I believe, are calling attention to the existence of a blind spot which unavoidably insinuates itself into all our attempts to know ourselves. The activities necessary for self-knowledge ... are always one logical step behind themselves, and are blind to the very agency constitutive of and contemporaneous with them. We are unable to know ourselves in the very act of knowing ... We know ourselves through the categories, or through the 'Other' – and not as absolutely proximate and self-present. (1986: 74)

Sartre follows Kant's approach in seeking "to correct the strong tendency towards reification and substantialization which infects ... both philosophical and pre-philosophical self-knowing activities" (1986: 75) and holding a "radicalized version of the concept of constituting activity" (1986: 73) that ultimately denies straightforward knowledge of the self. More recently, Darnell (2005 – a contributor to this volume) has also published a monograph on the notion of self in Kant and Sartre, noting the complex relations between the two on this topic, and that Sartre's misreading of Kant may have led him to distance himself from Kantian thought more than he needed to; for example, "he most likely fell victim to Kant's characterization of the I of apperception as not only a unity, but also as a ground of identity" (2005: 27). Also as part of this body of research on theoretical philosophy, Gardner has recently considered the extent to which Sartre can be labelled a "transcendental philosopher". He paints a complex picture of the position of Sartre in the post-Kantian tradition, but nevertheless argues that in a substantial sense Sartre can be seen as following a Kantian line in some of his theoretical thinking. As an example, Gardner points to Sartre's "anti-naturalist strategy" as being "at least in substantial part, transcendental" (2011: 54) due to the use of recognizably transcendental argumentation.

Of course, there is much more literature now available as part of the growing body of research on Kant and Sartre – these have been merely examples to give at least a limited sense of the wealth of research