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## Symposia on Gender, Race and Philosophy

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### Commentaries on

Kathryn T. Gines

"Comparative and Competing Frameworks of  
Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*"

by

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With reply by

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### On the Limits of Philosophizing<sup>1</sup>

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A central focus of Kathryn Gines's paper is the claim that Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* deploys "frameworks of oppression" – that is, a certain way of discussing, in particular, anti-Black racism, antisemitism, colonialism, and class oppression – in two problematic ways (252). On the one hand, Beauvoir sometimes *compares* these forms of oppression with

the oppression of women by emphasizing the similarities among them. These comparisons are based on a central organizing notion in *The Second Sex*, the idea of "the other" (small 'o'); and Beauvoir has a habit, Gines argues, of assimilating all of the forms of oppression she invokes to one another. The cost of this assimilation is an elision of the particular and often complex ways various forms of bigotry create specific kinds of oppressions. Worse, Gines claims, there is often an implication in Beauvoir's comparison of women with Blacks, Jews, proletarians, and other oppressed peoples that "women" are not (also) Black, Jewish, proletarian, etc.; that is, that women are, by definition, white. This means that the experience, even the existence, of non-white women is, ironically, absent from Beauvoir's text.

In addition to worrying about Beauvoir's comparison of frameworks of oppression, Gines also draws our attention to the ways in which she sees Beauvoir putting the frameworks in *competition* with one another in service of arguing that the subordination of women is unique among forms of social oppression. First, women are what Beauvoir calls the "absolute Other" (with a capital O). Unlike Blacks, Jews, and proletarians, women have never revolted *en masse* against their condition. To put the point in the Hegelian terms of which Beauvoir is fond, they have never on a large historical scale demanded recognition from men. Gines reads Beauvoir as suggesting that the static, ahistorical nature of women's oppression not only makes it different from but also worse than the other kinds of oppression she discusses. When you put this claim together with the claim that Beauvoir's "woman" is implicitly a white woman, you get the erasure of non-white women in *The Second Sex*. As Gines puts it, "The subjugation of non-white women is obscured, not only in the form of what Beauvoir calls antifeminism, but also as a salient aspect of anti-Black racism, antisemitism, and/or classism that women within these groups simultaneously experience" (260).

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<sup>1</sup> At the kind invitation of Kathryn Gines, I presented an earlier version of this commentary on January 23, 2015, at a Penn State workshop on the paper that is the focus of this Symposium.

A third concern of Gines's is Beauvoir's tendency, largely through her appropriation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, to identify women's condition throughout history and even with respect to their role in human reproduction as a form of "slavery." The troubling irony of this move, Gines observes, is that "women slaves or enslaved women are largely disregarded in Beauvoir's analysis" (263). Following the intellectual historian Sabine Broeck, Gines understands what she calls the "logic" of the "woman-as-slave analogy" to have "deeply racist effects" (265). Broeck suggests that the binary opposition of slave and master has an "unspoken third term" namely, "the position of being abjected from this struggle," which is equivalent to "the early modern position of factually enslaved people of African origin."<sup>2</sup> As I understand Broeck (and I have read the article from which Gines quotes, which, as far as I can tell is the only place in which Broeck discusses this claim), the idea is that the aspiration to be a master is a function of the Hegelian slave's noticing a difference between himself or herself and an actual (abjected) slave, that is, a person who has no chance of becoming a subject. Insofar as the Hegelian object—a white woman, on Gines's reading of Beauvoir's analysis—is not literally enslaved, the abjected slave points up to her that she, unlike an actual slave, has the capacity to demand recognition from the subject, that is, of course, the unenslaved (i.e., white) man. Thus, in identifying woman as occupying the position of the Hegelian slave, Beauvoir ironically, and disturbingly, not only erases the fact of actual human slavery and, in particular, Black women's slavery, but also "perpetuates a white feminist strategy of exploiting the suffering of those actually enslaved to garner support for the cause of white women" (267).

Gines explicitly says in the last paragraph of her paper that her criticisms of Beauvoir should not stop people from reading *The*

*Second Sex*. We just need to acknowledge and analyze its shortcomings and "serious implications," rather than apologize for them—which, I infer from the way she refers to and cites my work in numerous places in her paper, she believes me to have been doing. I am prepared to take this call and this criticism seriously. There are all sorts of what I tend to call "howlers" in *The Second Sex*. For example, I personally find the just-so stories in the sections on history painfully compressed and often incredible. Beauvoir's mid-20th-century pop Freudianism also hurts my ears. Her discussions of women's bodily woes in the Biology chapter are sometimes melodramatic and even insulting, as when she states that during a woman's menstrual period "she feels most acutely that her body is an alienated opaque thing; it is the prey of a stubborn and foreign life that makes and unmakes a crib in her every month; every month a child is prepared to be born and is aborted in the flow of the crimson tide."<sup>3</sup> I understand that my frustration with these and other moments in *The Second Sex* is in very obvious ways not comparable with the serious charges Gines is in effect laying at Beauvoir's doorstep. So let me be quick to add that I agree with Gines that—if I can put the point this way, to save some time—in *The Second Sex* there is nary a hint of what we today would call an intersectional analysis of women's condition. When you put Beauvoir's comparing women to Blacks, Jews, and proletarians together with the fact that the woman she describes in many of the chapters in Book II of *The Second Sex* seems to have the money and the freedom to worry about her appearance or her sexual identity or the cleanliness of her house, or whether she's "frigid," and so on, you certainly can find reasons to construe Beauvoir as largely unconcerned with anything other than capitalist, Christian white women.

<sup>2</sup> Gines, 265. Gines is here quoting Sabine Broeck, "Re-Reading de Beauvoir 'after Race': Woman-as-Slave Revisited," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 14:1-2 (2011), 178.

<sup>3</sup> Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York, Random House/Vintage, 2011), 41.

That said: if Beauvoir's shortcomings, parochialism, and insensitivity amount to the exploitation and abjection of Black women and men and the demeaning or erasure of other groups to which she compares (white) women, then I can't see a reason why anyone should read the book except heuristically, as a reminder of how easily, and dangerously, an author's privilege can distort her perception of how things actually are in the world. If Gines's Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* exploits the suffering of others to further the interests of white women, then it follows that by holding Beauvoir up as a model feminist thinker, I, as a white woman, have been exploiting the suffering of others, and in particular Black women. And that would be a human failure of such proportions that I would not know how to go on as a philosopher.

I take Gines's words personally not just because I am a white woman who for 15 years has been urging feminists to return to Beauvoir's text, but also because Gines cites my work often in her paper. On p. 253 of her essay, for example, she implies that I have sought to canonize Beauvoir. In the context of attributing that goal to me, Gines quotes a claim of mine that "Beauvoir's aspirations to write about being a woman are inextricably intertwined with her discovery of what I argue is both her own philosophical voice and **a model for doing philosophical work** that lies waiting to be appropriated by both feminists and philosophers." This sentence appears in my book *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism*, which I wrote at a time—the turn of the present century—at which the vast majority of feminist thinkers believed we had already absorbed whatever *The Second Sex* might have to offer us.<sup>4</sup> The "model for doing philosophical work" that we find in *The Second Sex* is important, I argued, insofar as it shows us what it looks like to hold one's (ordinary) personal experience in the same space as one's (robustly) philosophical writing—that is,

with writing that has aspirations to make claims about how things are with the world that go beyond one's personal experience. *This* model is what, for me at least, makes *The Second Sex* an invaluable book for anyone who finds impossible or distasteful the idea of theorizing about How Things Are in a way that is false to, or drifts away from, one's own, on-the-ground experience of the world.

Of course, in adopting such a model, a philosopher always, at every turn, incurs a standing risk of *equating* her own experience with How Things Are and thereby not only of eliding, erasing, denying, and distorting other people's experience, but also perpetuating their suffering. My view is that if academic philosophy is to be anything other than an intellectual game we play in the academy, we are obliged to take that risk. All of us are products of our time, of the *Zeitgeist*, of our own aporias, and the tenacity of our convictions. We may thereby make it the case that we are unreadable—in the sense both of not being legible and being off-putting, perhaps horrifyingly so—to certain contemporaries and some future readers. This is not something we can control. Each of us has to decide if, e.g., Hegel's overt sexism makes his work unreadable. His view of women as non-rational animals may be deal-breakers for some people. Others—even the future selves of these same people—might find Hegel's proto-standpoint theory in the master-slave dialectic tremendously fruitful, perhaps even for thinking through the nature of Hegel's self-contradictions. Martha Nussbaum claimed 20 years ago that "to do feminist philosophy is simply to get on with the tough work of theorizing in a rigorous and thoroughgoing way, but without the blind spots, the ignorance of fact, and the moral obtuseness that have characterized much philosophical thought about women and sex and the family and ethics in the male-dominated academy."<sup>5</sup> I am suggesting

<sup>4</sup> Columbia University Press, 2001, 10. The boldfacing in the quotation in the previous sentence is not in the original.

<sup>5</sup> Nussbaum, "Feminists and Philosophy," *The New York Review of Books*, October 20, 1994, accessed July 28, 2015 <http://www.nybooks.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/articles/archives/1994>

that philosophizing about anything that matters in the world beyond our profession entails putting your own ignorance and obtuseness on display. It also requires making judgments about whether your own or other people's philosophical risk-taking has turned out to constitute a moral or political or social failure of monstrous proportions. I thank Kathryn Gines for giving me an occasion, painful as it may be, to reflect on my case.

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[/oct/20/feminists-and-philosophy/](#). Nussbaum in this piece is reviewing the first edition of *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, edited by Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004). I discuss this quotation in another context in Chapter 1 of *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

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### Comments on Gines

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Let me say first how deeply honored and grateful I am by being included in this productive and overdue debate even though I am not a trained philosopher. Actually, the work I have been doing on Beauvoir and others has required me to stray far away from my own discipline proper, African-American Studies. It would not have been possible without the work of Black feminist theoreticians Toni Cade Bambara, the Combahee River Collective, the editors Hull, Bell Scott and

Smith of 1982's *But Some Of Us Are Brave*, Audre Lorde, Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, and the intellectual labor by pioneering Black feminist philosophers like Kathryn herself and others, assembled in the breadth and depth of publications emerging out of the *Collegium of Black Women Philosophers*. To all these leading activist intellectuals and scholars I have turned again and again and have learned my thinking from them; they have been my mentors – if not in person, then very much in spirit - to enable me to push towards a white-on-white project critical of gender, and of white gender studies, of which my Beauvoir article is one crucial part.

Obviously, Gines' analysis of Beauvoir's classic conducts a compelling argument. The way I read her intervention, she moves forward an intersectionally oriented critique of *The Second Sex* from the very point of view suppressed in Beauvoir's thinking: it is the Black woman's structural position which enables a perspective on all women in which race, class and gender oppression *and* supremacy, respectively, are neither competitive, nor comparatively situated, but intricately interdependent – a point which Black feminists have been making ever since Fran Beale's pioneering manifesto in 1969, which has been echoed decades ago by many texts like Toni Cade Bambara's *The Black Woman* from 1970, and the Combahee River Collective's pamphlet of 1977 running through to these day and age's blogs like Alexis Pauline Gumbs' <http://www.alexispauline.com/apgblog/>.

The recurring, repeating and exhausting urgency of this debate, and of a white feminist reckoning with Black women's labor, has been driven home in popular culture just some time ago with the enormous success of the anti-Black movie *The Help*, which to me is most flawed politically and intellectually (among a lot of its other problems) by its complete erasure of decades of Black feminist instruction and radical critique of, and endlessly patient negotiation with white feminist and gender studies; instead it presents Black women as voiceless

virgin beings in need of white teaching, consciousness-raising and salvation, thus aggressively turning (post)civil rights history on its head.

To engage in this ongoing political and popular debate to which, in my view that I assume Kathryn and I share (and which Beauvoir would have endorsed herself), philosophy must be beholden if it is not to remain in its ivory tower, let me make a few suggestions.

As Kathryn amply demonstrates, one of Beauvoir's misconceptions is to figure women's oppression (in the universalizing sense of generic women) as absolute – meaning all women are oppressed by all men, categorically – without addressing the extent to which an acknowledgement of particularities and differences among women would impact her specific theory of women's predicament, and women's liberation. I want to push this point somewhat further by asking: can Black men be patriarchal?

If the alignment of human social being in Western modern societies has been split along lines of gender, and if we consider that very split a construction tout court which pertains to, and is conditioned on one's human-ness in the first place, Black men have not been able, have not been interpellated to enter into the binary economy of gender anymore than Black women have, as Hortense Spillers and Frank Wilderson have argued. Just to avoid misunderstandings: of course, there is an extended body of Black feminist knowledge detailing the phenomenology of Black male violence against Black women, on all possible kinds of levels, but does this enactment of violence ever mean that the privilege of engenderment – as modern societies have known it – has accrued to Black men? (Following Spillers, Black women do not inhabit it, as the afterlife of slavery descendancy of un-human fleshness overwrites their existence.) Thus, given the dehumanization of Black being by white anti-Blackness, no such patriarchally

inflected power position, no clearly hierarchical binary division, neither on the performative nor on the structural level, has underwritten the existence of Black men and the relations between Black men and Black women. (Let alone relations to white women).

I am making this point to tease out a more pronounced critique of Beauvoir's stance vis-à-vis anti-Blackness. Her analysis has no more acute understanding of Black men, than it has of Black women, precisely because she has no understanding of, as Césaire and others have called it, the thingification of Black being, of the politics, cultures and histories of *enslavism* (Broeck 2014), which structurally excluded Black life forms (a term borrowed from Walcott) from the regime of the human. To me, the crucial problem with *The Second Sex* is its deployment of the Hegelian binary – which has installed a Western white philosophical train of thought that knows “slavery” only as a hefty metaphor for states of white oppression and has remained agnotologically innocent of the enslavement trade and of Western modernity as a regime of slavery.

Therefore, as a further response to Gines' reading, I want to make a point that I have thought about for some time now, but have not been able to articulate clearly for lack of interlocution. This is to reconsider the framework of ‘racial difference’. The term functions as the post 1980's gender studies' key-trope in reaction to Black feminist interventions, as a term analogous to ‘sexual difference’ which in turn evolved into a quasi naturalized given since its first deployment in the era of US ethnic, anti-sexist multiculturalism-powered diversity claims. Vis-à-vis the ubiquitous power of “difference” as a term that has set the debates for the last 25 years, the problem for me with, for example Beauvoir's difficulty to acknowledge Black women's agency, is not that she does not understand differences among women, but that she does not acknowledge *enslavism* (see Broeck 2015), which would entail seeing anti-Blackness as a constitutive feature of white societies. Black



female being –in that perspective –structurally does not range as “different from” white women, but as not human in the first place. (Broeck 2008)

Black social and civil death (not a metaphor, in view of the trajectory from Trayvon Martin through Ferguson to the Charleston’s massacres in June 2015), to hint at Patterson’s by now notorious term, constitutes a challenge to white thinking much more exacting than the worn paradigm of “difference”. The abjection of Black life forms in the ongoing afterlife of transatlantic enslavement, as Saidiya Hartman has so poignantly pointed out, has created Blackness, and Black people as a group of “sentient beings” (see Wilderson) outside of the realm of humanity, characterized by the structural absence of intra-human relationality, and thus by the structural *evacuation from* human difference.

So the problem I see as critical in Beauvoir’s feminism is that she does not even try to go where Fanon – who was her immediate and known contemporary – would have taken her: the white man is because the Black is not. Structurally speaking, in this anti-Black power, white woman is included ever since she has successfully fought for not being treated as a ‘slave.’ To acknowledge that Black epistemic point would have not permitted Beauvoir to speak about ‘women’ in the universalizing sense, thus conveniently erasing Black women as the negligible particular. It would have not permitted a use of ‘slavery’ as helpful and self-empowering metaphor for white women. And it would have required a letting go of the assumption that racism is a problem pertaining to Black people and as such is, at best, usable (fungible!, to use Hartman’s term) for demonstrative reasons as a parallel to sexism – instead of having to reckon with white women’s racist power over Black people. Beauvoir, in my contention, was instrumental for ‘(white) women’s lib’ – but that very, and undoubted (by me) philosophical advance has constituted its own mode of anti-Black abjection. To realize that, would have exploded the

notion of white feminism, based as it was on ‘women’s’ absolute powerlessness and lack, at the moment of its conception.

So, I am very interested in how Kathryn would respond to this point of white-on-white questioning: To me –an outsider, mind you, to philosophy departments –reading Beauvoir as philosopher does not need defense. To grant her crucial epistemic importance and leverage for feminism is beyond doubt. In terms of a critical re-reading of gender theory’s genealogy, however, we need to concern ourselves with the white supremacist power position Beauvoir’s philosophy has strengthened in effect, making the human subject and its modern and postmodern reign fully inhabitable for white women: over and against black women and men.

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### For a Saturated Intersectionality

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#### *Intersectional times*

Asking a question characteristic of some of the first gestures of intersectionality theory, Elizabeth Spelman elaborated a well-known critique of Simone de Beauvoir by asking, “just who does she think ‘we’ is?” (Spelman 1990, 57):<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The question is used as the sub-title to Spelman’s chapter on Beauvoir in *Inessential Woman* (Spelman 1990).

We can’t describe the sexism women are subject to without specifying their class; nor can we understand how sexism works without looking at its relation to class privilege.. . . this poses some very serious difficulties for her attempt to give a general account of woman. (Spelman 1990, 63)

Kathryn Gines’ critique of analogy belongs to the second time of intersectionality theory. Her paper “Comparative and Competing Frameworks of Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*,” adds to an important critical scrutiny of the analogies historically beloved by white feminists. These have included the once ubiquitous analogies between enslavement and the subordination of women to which Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott appealed (Gines 2010, 36), as did writers from Mary Wollstonecraft to Simone de Beauvoir. Gines is among those who have demonstrated how a white perspective is typically presupposed by “the use of racial oppression as an analogy for gender oppression.” Since, as Spelman once wrote, “half of the populations to whom [Beauvoir] compares women consist of women,” (Spelman 1990, 65) analogizing women to slaves falsely separates them so as to liken them, supposes they do not overlap, and occludes the experiences of enslaved women from the resulting analyses of femininity. “Like this analogy,” Gines suggests (analogizing the analogy), “historically white feminism has often ignored the ways in which black women experience sexist oppression differently because of the added burden of racism” (Gines 2010, 36).<sup>2</sup> In 1792, Mary

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<sup>2</sup> Gines’ forthcoming “Simone de Beauvoir and the Race/Gender Analogy in *The Second Sex* Revisited,” contributes a further development in her ongoing project. Here she argues for a more precise distinction between Beauvoir’s analogical references to racism on the one hand, and to enslavement, on the other.

Wollstonecraft could declare with gusto, “I argue from analogy,” (Wollstonecraft 1995, 126, 285) whereas today a very wide range of contemporary feminist, political, and queer theorists have strenuously taken their leave from arguments from analogy.<sup>3</sup>

Spelman and Gines also share an interest in the way intentions that seem promising from an intersectionalist perspective can betray or sabotage themselves. For example, Gines points out in “Comparative and Competing Frameworks,” that Beauvoir “herself notes that it is a mistake to assimilate woman to the slave” (Gines 2014, 263). Spelman notes that Beauvoir offered “all the ingredients of a feminist account of women’s lives that would not conflate woman with a small group of women...namely white middle class heterosexual Christian woman. Yet de Beauvoir ends up producing an account which does just that” (Spelman 1990, 58). In her 2010 essay, when Gines makes mention of Gloria Steinem’s comparative analysis of the sexism directed at Hilary Clinton and the racism directed at Barack Obama, her point is that: “Steinem acknowledges ‘the caste systems of sex and race are interdependent and can only be uprooted together,’ [yet] her remarks throughout the piece do not reflect this understanding” (Gines 2010, 38). Here also is a methodological gesture vital to many insights of intersectionality theory: Gines directs our attention to the all-too-common gap between what is declared and what is actually reflected in one’s analysis.

#### *Limited versus saturated intersectionality*

Yet the many times of intersectionality theory have also included aversion to an overly extreme version of itself, an extremity sometimes associated with postmodernism (Garry

2011, 839 ).<sup>4</sup> Consider the diagrammatic complexity Charles Mills proposes for the intersections of race and sex in “Intersecting Contracts.” He averts an exaggerated multiplication of axes of subordination, making reference to Mary Maynard’s concern that “so many forms of difference are created that it becomes impossible to analyze them in terms of inequality or power,” (Maynard 2001, 129, cited Mills 2007, 170). From this perspective, in other words, it isn’t self-evident that the intersectionality of gender and race is best analyzed through a simultaneous analysis of all the intersecting subordinations of sexuality, class, wealth, education, generation, and disability one could acknowledge.<sup>5</sup> Some think this would veer towards an overly fragmented analysis, particularly if it weakens the ability to recognize inequality.

For this reason, it is important to hesitate before querying an omission in the intersections on which Gines concentrates in “Frameworks of Oppression,” (“the general woman Beauvoir describes is not a Black woman, a Jewish woman, a colonized woman or proletariat woman,” Gines 2014, 251) and in “Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy” (“of course this is a grossly simplified understanding of race and gender that still ignores other intersecting aspects of identities (including nationality, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, etc),” (Gines 2010 38). Both these summaries omit the important threshold of subordination mentioned by Audre Lorde (Lorde 1984, 115-6), and extensively by Beauvoir: aging.

Aging must be added to the alterities we include among Beauvoir’s concerns: those of colonization, racism, and class, in

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Halley 2000, see also the Introduction to Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (revised 1999 edition) and “Merely Cultural,” Butler 1997, 269).

<sup>4</sup> Garry speaks to the widespread preference in the literature for “safe and useful” frameworks of intersectionality, “without dangerous implications of gender proliferation or theory fragmentation” (Garry 2011, 844).

<sup>5</sup> To the contrary, Garry, who speaks for a version which is inclusive but “modest”, (826) proposes a number of models which avoid fragmentation and excessive proliferation: these include Wittgensteinian family resemblance, and a “roundabout” model proposed as an alternative to Crenshaw’s traffic intersection model of discrimination (Garry 2011, 831-2).

addition to sex.<sup>6</sup> But Beauvoir's 1970 work, *Old Age*, also made evident that aging was more than the "plus one" to this list. Her extensive considerations of aging, here and earlier, allow a reconsideration of the analogical and comparative accounts of subordination she sometimes favors. *Old Age* proposed an answer to a question posed in *The Second Sex*'s conclusion: what might constitute a new basis for fraternity between the sexes? In *Old Age* Beauvoir described every human subject as the "dwelling-place of our own future old age" (Beauvoir 1977, 4). Beauvoir's emphasis on the differentiations effected by these transformations undid more successfully the "general" account of woman, though it did so by also veering towards a different generality. Beauvoir associated aging with an always-impending transformation, and so with a singular alterity inhabiting every human, and an additional sense in which humans share the lived experience of becoming other within their lifetime. This is also to share or anticipate the experience of transformation towards a social category of sub-humanity, as Beauvoir described the association of aging with an abject alterity.

In published essays and ongoing work, Gines has challenged the capacity of Beauvoir's work to think the intersectionality of race and gender. She has asked how well it provides a space for the representation of "black women (and other women of color) alongside the black men and white women situated in these frameworks" (Gines 2010, 44). My question to this project is whether it could include in its scope the intersectionality of alterities specific to Beauvoir's discussions of aging? Here are some further queries to which this could lead.

If Spelman's question, "just who does [Beauvoir] think 'we' is?" meets with the answer, "tacitly middle class, tacitly white," what age is tacitly presupposed by Beauvoir's "we"? In

theoretical and fictional work, Beauvoir emphasizes the differences between the four year old, the pre-pubescent and pubescent adolescent, the young woman, the young married woman, a middle aged woman, a menopausal woman, a woman in advanced years. However, and notwithstanding a number of references to cultural differences, again Beauvoir often presupposes these are the differentiated experiences of white middle class women and girls. So Gines' work on Beauvoir has much to offer a re-reading of *Old Age*.

### *Intersectionality and aging*

For, on the one hand, Beauvoir's considerations of aging lead her towards a more systematic fragmentation (broached in *The Second Sex*, *Old Age*, fiction, narratives, autobiography) of identity, including gendered identity. As I have elsewhere suggested, there is, for Beauvoir, no sex without age and no age without sex. But on the other hand, the phenomenon described by Gines repeats in Beauvoir's consideration of aging. *The Second Sex* does discuss aging intermittently, including some important passages on menopause and the experience of some women with grown children. *Old Age* foregrounds men's experience of old age. But both works omit an extended analysis of women's old age, nor are the experiences of women of color (already largely occluded) considered from the perspective of age differentials, the alterity of aging, and generational difference.

Moreover, Gines' analysis would quickly identify Beauvoir's more extended analyses of masculinity in her 1970 work as further occluding questions of race. The importance of age and generational difference (generational transmission, the relative economic worth of those of reproductive age, intersections of reproduction and property) to the relations of slavery and colonialism are also lost from Beauvoir's discussion.

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<sup>6</sup> See Spelman's *Inessential Woman* on Beauvoir's consideration of class and racism. (Spelman omits a discussion of Beauvoir's work on age and aging but the latter would fit her analysis well).

In short, Gines' work offers a perspective we can importantly direct not only at *Old Age*, but also at a phenomenon more generally apparent in Beauvoir's work. Beauvoir frequently describes the intersections of sex with age, as when she describes the capacity of adolescent girls for class- and age-based cruelty. To do so is to differentiate the "bloc"-like reference to women also characterized by Spelman. But the way in which Beauvoir does so tends to re-establish a bloc, as when Beauvoir breaks down the category "women" by instituting a new bloc: "adolescent girls." The same point could be made of Beauvoir's references in *Old Age* to men who retire. Beauvoir offers an important contribution to the analysis of alterity and aging when she describes the different relationships to male gender norms of young, middle-aged, and retiring men. This is also a contribution to the intersectionality of age and sex since only the interlocking sex of age and age of sex could explain the catastrophic aspects Beauvoir identified in the retirement (so to speak) of masculinity.

This is another context in which Beauvoir pursues the aim of differentiation (here, age differentiation) but only by generalizing the experiences of retiring men. Describing the shock of retirement, Beauvoir speaks to the loss, for men, of the authority and visibility they otherwise access in the public sphere. Unlike women, she claims that men are unprepared for this loss, for, compared to women, they lose a form of public authority not accessed by the wife traditionally responsible for the household. *Inessential Woman* identifies with bemusement this register in Beauvoir's earlier work: "Beauvoir's perceptiveness about class and race equality should make us wonder about her account of the 'man' as 'citizen' and 'producer' with economic independence," (Spelman 1990, 64). Read with Gines, Beauvoir's account is all the more implausible. Moreover, an attention to Beauvoir's work on aging highlights all the more the problems identified by Gines. Despite her engagement with the analyses of Richard Wright,

her later familiarity with Fanon, and Beauvoir's attention to ongoing inequalities in the wake of slavery and colonialism, she still manages, as late as 1970, to refer to the public sphere as a context in which "men" generally have authority to the point that being deemed "old," will deliver the shock of being rendered the other. Gines' work helps identify the default privilege in the assumption that men who retire are not already well-familiar with the shock of being othered. She reveals the faulty analysis and also the opportunity missed by Beauvoir to differentiate the intersecting relationships between aging and multiple alterities.

### *Intersectionality and Sabotage*

Among the possibilities for understanding oscillations in which Beauvoir undoes her "general account of woman" through new differentiations of "men" and "women" (which in fact establish newly general accounts), Gines and Spelman have suggested that Beauvoir sabotages her own argument (Gines 2014, 263; Spelman 1990, 64). In her 2010 essay "Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy," Gines has contrasted Beauvoir with earlier women philosophers who offer promising resources to contemporary theorists of intersectionality, giving attention to the work of Anna Julia Cooper. Cooper is characterized as offering a "theoretically nuanced articulation of black women's intersectionality," (Gines 2010, 46). Gines turns to Cooper and other black feminist texts when taking a retrospective look at fore figures in the history of women philosophers. While her project could be described as one of recovery, her work more generally leads us to rethink the options of recovery versus sabotage.<sup>7</sup> Could

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<sup>7</sup> Thinking in such stark terms may also lead to the conclusion that to study Beauvoir's analogies is either to support them, or to repudiate them. Surprisingly, Broeck attributes to *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir* (Deutscher 2008) the view that Beauvoir's analogies were "worthwhile, overdue", Broeck (2012, 168) but see the different viewpoint offered by Gines in "Simone de Beauvoir and the Race/Gender Analogy in *The Second Sex*

we reconsider the latter term – and in doing so, also reconsider the possible implication that Beauvoir’s oscillation in one direction undoes the oscillations in the other? And if so, how might this add to the range of possibilities for interpreting the work of Cooper? A more “saturated” direction of intersectional analysis might suit Gines’ ongoing interest in insights that are not realized by their own articulation.

One of the most intriguing routes Gines offers for approaching Cooper opens up all the more if the options of “sabotage” versus “theoretically nuanced articulation” can be reconsidered. Consider the possibility that Cooper’s commitments, including her rejection of exclusionary reasoning,<sup>8</sup> are multi-faceted to the point Gines could ask in what ways Cooper’s work may also have established some understandings it did not fully reflect. As she has acknowledged, her re-readings of Cooper need not exclude critical scrutiny of Cooper’s positions on immigration, the hierarchies of peoples, or effeminacy, for example, nor of Cooper’s own analogies.<sup>9</sup> To be sure, this kind of interrogation takes on a different stakes when directed at Beauvoir or at Cooper. The point is to discuss further, not to level such differences. Gines’ work opens up the possibility of further readings of Cooper using the rich formulation distinctively

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Revisited.”

<sup>8</sup> See for example Gines’ nuanced discussion of Cooper’s “Woman Versus the Indian,” in *Voice From the South*, in which Cooper commits to the principle, “woman should not even by inference, or for the sake of argument, seem to disparage the weak. For woman’s cause is the cause of the weak; and when all the weak shall have received their due consideration, the woman will have her ‘rights,’ and the Indian will have his rights, and the Negro will have his rights,” (Cooper 1998, 105, cited Gines 2010, 45. Gines offers a nuanced discussion of this and similar passages from Cooper.

<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Gines who suggested these possibilities in question time during the first version of this exchange at a forum at the Department of Philosophy, Pennsylvania State University 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2015. My thanks to organizers Emily Grosholz and Kathryn T Gines for the invitation to respond to Gines at this forum.

developed by Gines to interrogate the variable ways in which a text can be said to “reflect its own understanding”

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## Symposia on Gender, Race and Philosophy

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### Comments on Gines

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### I. Introduction

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has been and continues to be heralded as a seminal work in feminist philosophy. The prominence of *The Second Sex* has largely been due to its object of examination: the situation of alterity that characterizes woman. Kathryn Gines' essay "Comparative and Competing Frameworks of Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*" critically engages Beauvoir's method for substantiating the claim that woman is oppressed. Gines argues that Beauvoir sets up comparative and competing frameworks of oppression.

These frameworks problematically suggest that sexism is akin to other forms of oppression, and that the situation of oppression tied to gender identity is more significant than other loci of identity and their respective experiences. Gines' contribution to the critical work on *The Second Sex* is of deep importance as it takes up the use of race and gender as comparators in the structure of oppression. Unfortunately, the comparison between race and gender remains, for the most part, uncritically engaged as a shortcoming of *The Second Sex*. The implication of this is the erasure of black women and the problematic comparison between white women and Black men. Hence, Gines' essay should be taken as a serious critical call to more responsible scholarship on *The Second Sex*.

### II. A Brief Overview of Gines' Arguments

Gines' first argument focuses on the way in which Beauvoir makes use of comparative frameworks of oppression. In order for Beauvoir to establish her claim that woman is other she compares her plight to that of the Black, the Jew, colonized people, and the proletariat.<sup>1</sup> The implication of this comparative structure, argues Gines, is that the justifications for the situation of inferiority are the same. Hence, what justifies the oppression of woman is the same as what justifies the oppression of the slave. However, as Gines notes, Beauvoir also takes note of key differences between situations of oppression, which undergird her claim gendered oppression is more substantial than other forms of oppression.

Gines' second argument focuses on highlighting the ways in which Beauvoir also sets up a competing framework of oppression in *The Second Sex*. She argues that Beauvoir notes some key differences in her comparisons thereby setting up a competing structure whereby gendered oppression is

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn T. Gines. "Comparative and Competing Frameworks of Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*." *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35:1-2 (2014): 251.

constructed as more important and significant than other axes of oppression. (258) This competitive structure is seen through Beauvoir's claim that woman exists in the absence of reciprocity. Woman and man do not participate in reciprocal relationships. Hence, woman is always in a situation of domination. Furthermore, Beauvoir notes that unlike other oppressed groups, women, although existing in a state of domination, have not become a numerical minority. Gines notes that Beauvoir insists that we cannot pinpoint a historical moment that can account for the subordination of women. In noting these key differences Beauvoir traces a unique situation of oppression of woman that fundamentally competes with any other axis of identity and its experiences. (258)

According to Gines, the trouble at the heart of Beauvoir's competing and comparative frameworks of oppression is that the woman that is described as oppressed in *The Second Sex* is white, but this fact goes unstated. Moreover, her subordination is problematically juxtaposed, through the use of generalizations and stereotypes, to the subjection of men in different forms of oppression. (259) However, this juxtaposition only extends so far given that the category of woman is distinct to the extent that her subordination is the result of a lack of reciprocity and does not have a historical event that can qualify the situation. Hence, Gines argues that the outcome of the framework of *The Second Sex* is the erasure of non-white women and the failure to capture salient aspects of those lives found in and through experiences of anti-Black racism, anti-semitism, and/or classism. (259) One of the most noteworthy ways in which this erasure is constructed is through the woman-slave analogy, which Gines provides a notable analysis of at the end of her essay.

Most significant in Gines' critical analysis of woman as slave analogy is the impact of the use of the situation of the slave as comparable to that of woman. In taking note of the ways in which this comparison surges throughout *The Second Sex*, Gines

argues that Beauvoir fails to mention women slaves or enslaved women. Furthermore, the issue of slavery has not been a central point of emphasis in the secondary literature on the book. (263) This is of deeply concern for Gines because at stake in Beauvoir's use of this comparison is the appropriation of Black suffering to advance her philosophical claims on the situation of woman, and this remains uncritically accepted by her readers. (267) I contend that this is one of the most important points made by Gines' because it not only describes a deep seated problem with *The Second Sex*, but it is also one that has failed to draw attention precisely because it is a problem about the whiteness that permeates the text.

### III. Critical Considerations

By drawing attention to the presumed white woman at the center of *The Second Sex* Gines is able to articulate the problematic implications generated by the framework of the text.

Most notably, the comparative and competing frameworks that characterize *The Second Sex* necessitate the erasure of women of color. However, when providing particular instantiations of this concern Gines only notes the erasure of black women. I am in full agreement with Gines' argument with respect to the erasure of black women. I am, however, left wondering how the erasure of women of color more broadly is complicated by the fact that *The Second Sex* in deploying competing and comparative structures also instantiates racial dynamics along the black-white binary. In coding race through white and black terms the structure of *The Second Sex* seems to not only erase black women, but also necessarily make other women of color imperceptible because they exceed the racial terms provided. For instance, the identity of Latina does not seem to be erased in the same way as black women are because the racial makeup of the identity of Latina exceeds the black-white binary. The racial dimensions Latina identity cannot be solely understood

through the black-white binary. If race is codified in and through black-white terms, as it is in *The Second Sex*, then Latinas do not seem erased, but rather rendered imperceptible from within the structure.

A further consideration sparked by Gines' analysis has to do with the status of the black male that drops out the framework of *The Second Sex*. Gines notes that the comparative structure codes race in and through the black male. Specifically, the plight of the black male slave is analogous to that of the white woman. She argues that the outcome of this comparative structure is the erasure of black women that warrants critical attention. However, the comparison between the white woman and the black male seems to also warrant significant attention beyond the erasure of the black women. Gines hints to this effect by noting that the comparison perpetuates a "white feminist strategy of exploiting the suffering of those actually enslaved to garner support for the cause of white women." (267) Yet, she does not further articulate the detriment found in the comparison between white women and black male slaves. Although she notes that this is not a trivial comparison, the comparative gesture requires more critical attention.

Black maleness continues to be confined by its social status of Black Death, which finds articulation in images of the black male as dangerous and criminal.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the status of danger and criminality is historically linked to enslavement. In drawing a comparison between the black male slave and the white woman, Beauvoir is also setting up a comparative structure that necessitates the occlusion of the relationship between white women and black male slaves. For instance, there are no conceptual tools available from the comparative structure to explore the rape of enslaved black men by white

women, which to date remains a topic that is underexplored because the discourse on rape rests on gendered lines that thwarts the possibilities of thinking of black men as victims of rape.<sup>3</sup> So this is not just a problematic comparison, it is a comparison that perpetuates a specific relationship of power between white women and black men and that needs to be noted.

Of further mention, Gines notably argues that Beauvoir also sets up a competing framework that identifies gender as more substantial to identity over other axes of identity. Yet, her position does not further question the way in which woman is constituted as always already in opposition to man, whereby the status of maleness is always rendered as a status of privilege. So, the gender identity of male bodies cannot be read as anything other than dominating. By privileging gender identity through a competing structure, there is also a failure to attend to how femininity is not just structured in relationship to men. The outcome is the implication that we must view all masculinities as privileged, a claim that in contemporary contexts is difficult to maintain given the routine and repetitive status of black male death in our society.

In closing, Gines' essay "Comparative and Competing Frameworks of Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*" is a very important contribution to the secondary literature on *The Second Sex*. Her arguments open up for discussion some of the most problematic and underexplored aspects of *The Second Sex*. In this essay I have attempted to provide further considerations that build on Gines' critical contributions. As such, I intend my response to contribute to the growth of secondary literature on *The Second Sex* that tackles the deep-seated troubles with the use of race and gender as analogous concepts.

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<sup>2</sup> Tommy J. Curry. "The Eschatological Dilemma: The Problem of Studying the Black Male only as the Deaths that Result from Anti-Black Racism." Forthcoming (2016) in *I Am Because We Are* Second Edition. ed. Fred L. Hord and Jonathon S. Lee.

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<sup>3</sup> Curry, "The Eschatological Dilemma," 7.

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### A Reply to Critical Commentaries

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In “Comparative and Competing Frameworks of Oppression in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*” (Gines 2015), I problematize Beauvoir’s deployment of comparative and competing frameworks of oppression. At times she describes the woman, the Black, the Jew, the colonized and the proletariat in ways that suggest sexism, on the one hand, and racism, antisemitism, colonialism and classism, on the other

hand, are comparative systems of oppression.<sup>1</sup> But when pointing to key differences between women and other groups she sets up competing frameworks of oppression – privileging gender difference in ways that suggest woman’s subordination is a more significant or constitutive form of oppression than racism, antisemitism, colonialism and/or class oppression. Looking closely at *The Second Sex*, alongside select divergent secondary literature on Beauvoir’s analogical analyses of oppression in that text, I have observed that Beauvoir’s critics are keenly aware of the arguments in support of Beauvoir. However, some of her supporters maintain an epistemological standpoint of ignorance concerning certain limitations of her feminist philosophy. This article seeks to offer a corrective to some of the exclusive tendencies in Simone de Beauvoir’s philosophy and the replications of these exclusions in existing scholarship on Beauvoir (and perhaps by extension in white feminist philosophy more generally). In reading the commentaries on my article, I find that Sabine Broeck, Stephanie Rivera Beruzz, and Penelope Deutscher are sympathetic with my article and Nancy Bauer takes my critiques of Beauvoir seriously (even if she does not agree with them). With this in mind, my reply to the critical commentaries will focus on the questions they pose that have implications for my article (as well as for my larger book project on Beauvoir).

Broeck notes that I am advancing “an intersectionally oriented critique of *The Second Sex* from the very point of view suppressed in Beauvoir’s thinking: it is the Black woman’s structural position which enables a perspective on all women

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<sup>1</sup> I prefer to keep “Black” and “Blackness” and “anti-Black” racism capitalized in the same way as “African American” is capitalized, though I use Black rather than African American throughout because it is a more inclusive term. Also, I prefer to keep “white” in lowercase as an intended disruption of the norm (i.e., using either capitals or lowercase letters for both terms). This preference is applied to the text in my own voice, but not to quotes of other texts.

in which race, class and gender oppression *and* supremacy, respectively, are neither competitive nor comparatively situated, but intricately interdependent..." While Broeck dates Black feminist traditions of intersectionally oriented critiques back to Frances Beale in 1969, I trace these critiques back to Maria W. Stewart in 1831 (Gines 2011). The analyses, critiques, and activism of Black feminists in the U.S. can be mapped from Stewart in the nineteenth century into our own current moment in the twenty-first century with the #BlackLivesMatter movement (founded by self-identified Black queer women Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi), as well as calls to #SayHerName and reminders that #BlackGirlsMatter. Over this span of almost two centuries, there has indeed been a "recurring, repeating, and exhausting urgency" of debates about race and gender oppression coupled with the "complete erasure of decades of Black feminist instruction and radical critique" of both white feminism and Black (masculinist) nationalism, as Broeck describes.

Although Broeck supports my critiques of Beauvoir and white feminism, she asks a very pointed question about Black men: "Can Black men be patriarchal?" Drawing from the work of Hortense Spillers and Frank Wilderson, Broeck asserts, "Black men have not been able, have not been interpellated to enter the binary economy of gender anymore than Black women have..." but to avoid misunderstanding she is careful to add that "there is an extended body of Black feminist knowledge detailing the phenomenology of Black male violence against Black women, on all kinds of levels..." Still, Broeck asks, "does this enactment of violence ever mean that the privilege of engenderment – as modern societies have known it – has accrued to Black men?" For me, Black male patriarchy is not contingent on the engenderment of Black men (and/or Black women). As bell hooks makes clear in her description of Beauvoir as a participant in patriarchy, "patriarchy has no gender" (hooks 2012). Yes, Black men can be patriarchal. Not only can Black men be patriarchal, but white women (and

women of color) can also accept, embrace, and deploy patriarchal thinking and behavior.

I do agree with Broeck that Beauvoir's analysis "has no more acute understanding of Black men, than it has of Black women," (despite the fact that Black men are named and Black women are not). Berruz makes a similar point in her comments, noting "the status of the black male...drops out of the framework of *The Second Sex*" and "the detriment found in the comparison between white women and black male slaves...requires more critical attention." However, I disagree with Broeck's implicit suggestion that Black men are without a "patriarchally inflected power position" and (therefore?) do not participate in patriarchy. We can look at historical examples of patriarchal condescension expressed by Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, and W.E.B. Du Bois in relationship to Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, and Ida B. Wells Barnett (Gines 2010 and 2014b). We can also look at current examples of the myriad ways that Black social and civil death (not to mention epistemic violence and epistemic death) is impacting Black people along numerous intersections, not only Black males. I do not want to claim, as Berruz suggests, that the status of maleness is *always* a "status of privilege" and/or that "male bodies cannot be read as anything but dominating." However, it is the case that a status of privilege and domination are possible for Black men, even with the "routine and repetitive status of black male death in our society." This status of privilege is in part evidenced by the attention given to the impact of state violence and the deaths of Black men and the comparative inattention to the impact of state violence and the deaths of Black girls and women (notwithstanding their visibility as wives, mothers, and mourners of Black boys and men).

Beyond the question of patriarchy and privilege of Black men, Berruz raises several important issues with which I am in agreement. She rightly points out that while I mention the

erasure of women of color in *The Second Sex*, my examples of this erasure focus on erasures of Black women only. I focus on Black women in this article and earlier related publications; however, I use the more inclusive phrase “women of color” to signal the multiple erasures that are occurring in *The Second Sex*. In conference presentations and in the larger book project I examine problematic engagements with and erasures of Latinas as well as Jewish women, Asian women, Arab women and Native American women. Berruz argues that Latinas are rendered imperceptible in *The Second Sex* and I think this is correct, not only for Beauvoir’s use of the race/gender analogy (operating along a Black-white binary in which race is coded as Black men and gender as white women) but also throughout the entire text which offers no considerations of Latina identity, experience, and oppression.

Whereas Beruzz takes up the imperceptibility of Latinas, Penelope Deutscher takes up the absence of aging in my intersectional analysis in the article. Deutscher brings aging to the forefront of Beauvoir’s analysis of alterity, presenting it as a singular alterity inhabiting every human. My response, which Deutscher anticipates, is that we can and should think about aging as a form of alterity but aging must also be thought intersectionally. Experiences of aging and perceptions about aging would vary across other identity categories like race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, religion, culture, etc. My intersectionally oriented analysis can include in its scope Beauvoir’s discussions of aging, and as Deutscher points out, this analysis would also take seriously the ways that Beauvoir similarly erases women of color, along with questions of slavery and colonialism, while continuing to presuppose whiteness in her insights about women, girls, and age.

In addition to the issue of aging, Deutscher poses questions about recovery, theoretically nuanced articulations, and sabotage. Here she has in mind the recovery of Beauvoir by white feminists as well as my own recovery work on Anna

Julia Cooper. In my experience the work of recovering women thinkers – women of color and white women – is more likely to lead to sabotage than theoretically nuanced articulation (if/when these recovered figures are engaged by men of color and white men). So Beauvoir is more likely to be sabotaged than Jean-Paul Sartre and Cooper is more likely to be sabotaged than W.E.B. Du Bois. And in these cases, by sabotaged I mean either cast aside altogether and/or labeled in ways that allow for oversimplified readings or non-engagement of their theories.

Last, but not least, Nancy Bauer raises issues that are related to Deutscher’s questions about recovery, theoretically nuanced articulations, and sabotage. Bauer acknowledges that *The Second Sex* lacks “what we would call today an intersectional analysis of women’s condition” but she moves on quickly to other pernicious problems. Bauer asserts, “if Beauvoir’s shortcomings, parochialism, and insensitivity amount to the exploitation and abjection of Black women and men and the demeaning erasure of other groups to which she [Beauvoir] compares (white) women, then I [Bauer] can’t see a reason why anyone should read the book except heuristically, as a reminder of how easily, and dangerously, an author’s privilege can distort her perception of how things actually are in the world.” Bauer continues, “[i]f Gines’ Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* exploits the suffering of others to further the interests of white women, then it follows that by holding Beauvoir up as a model feminist thinker, I [Bauer], as a white woman, have been exploiting the suffering of others, and in particular Black women. And that would be a human failure of such proportions that I [Bauer] would not know how to go on as a philosopher.”

And yet, here Bauer is and here we all are – philosophers and academics – going on with our scholarship of research, teaching, and administration/service. Bauer and the rest of us have continued as philosophers despite the realities of the

seemingly hyperbolic but *actually* quite accurate observations offered here by Bauer about Beauvoir. These are issues not only for Beauvoir in particular, but also the Western philosophical tradition more generally. I agree with Bauer that doing philosophy that matters “entails putting your own ignorance and obtuseness on display.” But the consequences of this vary. White male philosophers continue to display their ignorance and obtuseness by deifying their beloved dead (or living) white male philosophers with no regard for issues of sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, etc. and with no regard for critiques outlining these issues from feminist philosophy, critical philosophy of race, queer philosophy, indigenous philosophy. Many white feminist philosophers follow a similar pattern, disregarding relevant critiques from women of color feminists.

Bauer notes, Beauvoir and *The Second Sex* offers a model for doing philosophical work. But this philosopher and this text models multiple things for multiple readers, not only the positive model described by Bauer, but also the problems that have been outlined by me and others. I have no expectations that Beauvoir scholars, even those sympathetic to my arguments, denounce her altogether. And that was not my intention. But if Beauvoir scholars teach and write her work in a more honest and theoretically nuanced way – a way that places these issues of absence and exploitation at the center of Beauvoir’s work rather than as murmurs on the margins, then that is an improvement.

Let me conclude by thanking *Symposium on Gender, Race, and Philosophy* (especially Sally Hallsanger and the editors Ronald R. Sundstrom, Alia Al-Saji, Cynthia Willet, and Robert Gooding-Williams) for featuring my article as well as Sabine Broeck, Nancy Bauer, Penelope Deutscher, and Stephanie Rivera Beruzz for their critical commentaries. This article is part of my larger manuscript on racism, sexism, and colonialism in Beauvoir’s writings. In the book project I am

engaging Beauvoir philosophically while situating the debates and encounters between Beauvoir and her interlocutors (e.g. Jean-Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon, and Richard Wright, as well as Gunnar and Alva Myrdal) in an intellectual historical context. I examine Beauvoir’s (and her interlocutors’) analyses of race/racism, gender/sexism, and colonialism/anti-colonialism as systems of oppression paying particular attention to places where these figures’ analyses, insights, and oversights converge and/or diverge with one another. Like my last book *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question* (Gines 2014a), I want to make philosophical interventions concerning questions of race, colonialism and violence that are conversant with but not limited to the existing (white) feminist debates around Beauvoir’s philosophy. Furthermore, I engage women of color feminist arguments that are often absent in both white feminist philosophical debates and critical philosophy of race debates about these intellectual figures. These critical commentaries offer invaluable insights for the larger project.

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