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Howard Davies
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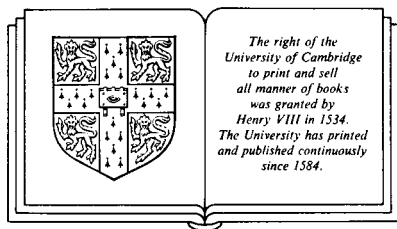
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HOWARD DAVIES

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La revue, nous y rêvions depuis 1943. Si la vérité est une, pensais-je, il faut, comme Gide l'a dit de Dieu, ne la chercher nulle part ailleurs que partout [. . .] Nous serions des chasseurs de sens . . .

Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Merleau-Ponty', *Situations IV*

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

This series aims at providing a new forum for the discussion of major critical or scholarly topics within the field of French studies. It differs from most similar-seeming ventures in the degree of freedom which contributing authors are allowed and in the range of subjects covered. For the series is not concerned to promote any single area of academic specialisation or any single theoretical approach. Authors are invited to address themselves to *problems*, and to argue their solutions in whatever terms seem best able to produce an incisive and cogent account of the matter in hand. The search for such terms will sometimes involve the crossing of boundaries between familiar academic disciplines, or the calling of those boundaries into dispute. Most of the studies will be written especially for the series, although from time to time it will also provide new editions of outstanding works which were previously out of print, or originally published in languages other than English or French.

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PREFACE

Jean-Paul Sartre's monthly review *Les Temps Modernes* is an immediately attractive object of study. From 1945 to the present day it has promoted far-reaching debate in the fields of philosophy and political theory, in the arts and in those disciplines that the French know as the *sciences humaines*. Formerly, it was the vehicle chosen by some of the most prestigious intellectual authorities of post-war France; latterly, it has become much more the mouth-piece of those whom Régis Debray calls the *basse intelligentsia* – those, in other words, who offer radical critiques of contemporary French society from the 'coal-faces' of its various institutions rather than from the vantage points of the university mandarin or of the self-employed *littérateur*.

Fundamentally, however, this change in ethos, which dates from the aftermath of the upheavals of May 1968, came about in order to allow *TM*¹ to stay the same: it remains a journal clearly committed to a left-wing political programme. To regard any publication as a mere historical record of the years in which it appears is to misapprehend systematically the relationship of 'comment' to 'event'. *TM* has never allowed its readers to fall into this error; throughout forty turbulent years of French history it has striven, often turbulently, to render comment as eventful as it could possibly be and thus to usher in a socialist revolution.

One of the most fascinating aspects of *TM*'s history is the fluctuating height of profile of its founder and first *directeur*. Sartre may have been the high priest of existentialism for the rest of the French press in the years following the Liberation, but his own periodical never sought to purvey this image. It is simply not appropriate to view *TM* as the vehicle of a corpus of ideas elaborated, either within it or elsewhere, by one man. It has always been much more of a forum, in which Sartre moved between background and foreground, as indeed did many others. *TM* did not respond only to his initiatives; neither did it lose its dynamism

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whenever he gave it less than his full attention. Indeed, I hope to be able to demonstrate the extent of his dependence on it.

Of course, it is true that Sartre imposed on his publication certain moral and political parameters, but in practice his attitude seems to have been far removed from the authoritarian and the sectarian. If it is felt to be absolutely necessary to regard the review as an 'expression' of its prime mover, then it is best to perceive it as a celebration of the two moral values that underpin all of Sartre's philosophical project – reciprocity and generosity. Founder and review can be seen in the long term to influence each other immensely, but they do so in a specifically collective context in which the sense of all that is written is allowed to be modified by those who share the same aims. In this sense it is fair to say that *TM* is Sartre's greatest creation, by virtue of the extent to which it consistently redefines and escapes him. It is certainly all that he would have wanted of his progeny.

Despite its attractiveness, *TM* presents certain difficulties to the would-be analyst. The first is the problem of bulk: it is now approaching its 500th number, has grown to an overall size of 100,000 pages and has published articles by nearly 2,000 contributors (about one third of whom, incidentally, have been foreigners).² Secondly, there is the fact that while it ranges across a number of academic disciplines, it does so in order to contest their boundaries, their rationales and their methodologies.

There is thus a twofold danger: that students of *TM* may so disperse their attention across the range of material that all possibility of incisiveness disappears; or that they may be so far drawn into intractable epistemological problems that their investigations lose confidence and direction. Francis Mulhern, in his skilful analysis of the British periodical *Scrutiny*, modestly alludes to his 'over-strained authorial competence':³ in the present study, a much greater strain is immodest enough to aspire to equal invisibility.

My methodological considerations proceed from the fact that Sartre's 'synthetic anthropology' – the *raison d'être* of *TM* – while phenomenological in inspiration and revolutionary in intent, is, in conventional academic terms, supra-disciplinary. The existing surveys of *TM*,⁴ on the other hand, are resolutely sectoral (one is political and the other literary) and necessarily offer an incomplete view of the relationship of these parts to the whole. In doing so, they abandon the dialectical approach which Sartre spent so much time and energy promoting.

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It is for this reason that I propose to focus closely on what I shall loosely call academic anthropology, and on its relations, established within *TM*, with Sartre's homonymous, 'synthetic' venture. My hope is not only that part and whole may illuminate each other, but also that the shifts of their interface may clearly be seen to impel invasions and mobilisations of other discourses such as historiography, political theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, sociology, and so on. Any one of these disciplines, in fact, could theoretically be used to gain access to the whole. The choice of anthropology is thus arbitrary but not at all unjustified. Claude Lévi-Strauss and other prominent exponents contribute much to *TM*, but more important are the two long-standing editorial influences of Michel Leiris and Jean Pouillon. Academic anthropology, moreover, is the area in which Sartre's opposition to structuralism is most energetically expressed; in the particularly interesting period of the 1950s and 1960s, he succeeds in fusing his anti-structuralism with his anti-colonialism, to the point at which this dual enterprise becomes almost the principal motivation of the review.

I propose here, then, neither a history of Sartre's thought nor a sociology of a section of the French intelligentsia,⁵ but rather something that approximates to a Sartrean view of *TM*. The juxtaposition of academic and synthetic anthropologies permits a segmentation of the forty years into five periods, which I shall examine in turn. The fifth period, ending with the fortieth anniversary of the review, will be covered in the Conclusion; given the decision of the Editorial Board to continue publication beyond 1980, Sartre's death is not treated as a landmark. Equally, his vast study of Flaubert is mentioned only in passing. This is not to say that *L'Idiot de la famille* represents wholly extraneous material – Flaubert, after all, in the first issue of *TM*, is assigned the crucial role of repudiated patron. It is simply that this particular symbiosis merits a study of its own. For similar reasons, I make little reference to other major texts by Sartre which are 'unknown', as it were, to *TM*, as a result of their posthumous and very recent publication.⁶

I should say that I hope very much to offer satisfaction to different categories of reader. Certainly, anyone eager to acquire a general knowledge of French intellectual activity since the war cannot afford to ignore the concerns and achievements of *TM*. Those with greater specialist knowledge than I, either of Sartre the philosopher or of French anthropology or of the French publishing industry, will, I trust, welcome the chance to relocate their expertise in the fascinating context that I shall endeavour to describe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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