

**GINES, Kathryn T. Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy: A Case for Black Feminist Philosophy.** In DAVIDSON, Maria del Guadalupe; GINES, Kathryn T.; MARCANO, Donna-Dale L. (orgs.). *Convergences: Black Feminism and Continental Philosophy*. New York: SUNY Press. p. 35-52.

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Kathryn T. Gines' piece "Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy: A Case for Black Feminist Philosophy" is a unique and significant article which, at its core, argues that black feminist philosophy provides the necessary tools to critically assess a gaping void in the continental philosophical tradition. Specifically, Gines argues that within the continental tradition there is a notable absence of black feminist analysis with respect to how race and gender intersect and inform core phenomenological concepts. It is precisely by looking at the absence of black feminist philosophy that we can better ascertain the urgent need for black feminist analysis. In order to support her claims, Gines critically examines the race/gender analogy in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Jean Paul Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute*. In addition, Gines also focuses on the importance of Richard Wright's influence on both thinkers' phenomenological frameworks for understanding race. Gines' article is situated within the larger project of the book *Convergences: Black Feminism and Continental Philosophy*, which aims to provide a theoretical cross roads where the analysis of the black feminist tradition can be used to shed light on, or complicate our readings of central continental philosophical texts. The importance of this book cannot be over emphasized as the philosophical works of women of color in the discipline of philosophy have and continue to be marginalized and omitted

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from the 'traditional' canon. Works like that of Gines', and the rest of the book's contributors, are of utmost importance in opening a new theoretical terrain that considers the importance of black feminist thought and its utility in thinking through race, gender, and sexuality within different philosophical traditions.

Gines opens her analysis by examining the race/gender analogy that runs central to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. The *Second Sex* presents its readers with a central comparison between racial oppression and gender oppression. The analogy functions to reveal the way in which the situation of woman as Other is akin to the situation of the slave. However, the result of this analogy is the mapping of the category woman onto the position of the black male slave. Thus, readers are led to conclude that the plight of women in the world is akin with the plight of the American black slave. According to Gines:

the loose usage of institutionalized and racialized slavery and anti-black racism as an analogy for other forms of oppression proves to be problematic. The race/gender analogy often codes race as black man and gender as white woman, neglecting the woman of color (GINES, 2010, p. 36).

In considering each identity category as distinct from each other, Beauvoir overlooks a significant and important crux of identity, namely the way in which being raced and gendered in particular ways effects both how one experiences gender/race and gendered/racial oppression. This analogy is further complicated by the fact that its use is frequently exploited to support members of groups who are participating in anti-black racism (GINES, 2010, p. 36). For instance, GINES notes the historical limitations placed on women's movements in the U.S. to focus on liberating white women, while ignoring the oppression of women of color and people of color more generally (GINES, 2010, p. 36).

Gines' piece provides scholars with an excellent theoretical touchstone from which to engage *The Second Sex*. However, her article maintains as its primary focus the ways in which the race/gender analogy lacks a black feminist intersectional approach in the works of both J.P. Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. While noting the analogy's shortcomings and its potential hazards of use, Gines focuses on what has been absent from these authors' accounts and the ways in which black feminist theory can critically fill these voids. However, the article does not completely follow through with the implications that this 'dis-analogy' might have for our reading of *The Second Sex*. Gines' keen observations do,

however, underscore the urgent need for black feminist theory in our philosophical canon, as well as the problematic exclusion of women of color from central feminist texts.

Gines' arguments, specifically concerning the race/gender analogy, provide an important opening to theorizing about the woman of color in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Given Beauvoir's emphasis on this analogy for understanding the situation of woman, the woman of color becomes caught in between the analogy without the possibility of being fully explored with the theoretical tools Beauvoir offers. Thus, the woman of color suffers from a certain epistemic exclusion in *The Second Sex*. In so far as Beauvoir fails to consider the complex intersection of race and gender, the woman of color, is not a standpoint from which an epistemology surges. There is no way of 'knowing' through the woman of color in *The Second Sex* because the very framework structured through the race/gender analogy renders her a subject caught in between the assumption of gender as white female and race as black male.

Women of color are marginal to Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex*. The only reference to women of color stands in the margins of a page as a footnote that reads: "We will examine this evolution in the Western world. The history of the woman in the East, in India, and in China, was one of long and immutable slavery. From the Middles Ages to today, we will centre this study on France, where the situation is typical" (BEAUVOIR, 2009, p. 89). The French white woman, who stands for Beauvoir as the 'typical' situation, problematically reinforces the notion that to be racialized as white is the 'standard' form from which all other categories 'deviate'.

In the spirit of Gines' call for black feminist analysis in reading continental philosophical texts, I wish to call upon the work of Audre Lorde in order to demonstrate the insight that can be gained from black feminist theory when reading *The Second Sex*. Audre Lorde's piece "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" contends that more often than not when we aim to talk about difference, we are actually talking about human deviance (LORDE, 1984, p. 116). Thus, the conversation necessarily entails a discussion about power and the norms that power creates when we hold one vision of identity as the benchmark for all others. Lorde's contentions allows for a critical read of what is happening in the margins of *The Second Sex*. However, if we continue to disallow a convergence between canonical works, such as these, and black feminist thought, we

inevitably lose great insight into understanding what certain philosophical frameworks exclude, and the importance of identifying these voids.

Kathryn T. Gines' piece brings to the forefronts the philosophical necessity of black feminist thought in our philosophical canon. She excellently articulates the importance of critically examining works like that of Simone de Beauvoir's through a black feminist lens. As a woman of color in philosophy I find myself constantly looking for tools that can better help me articulate my relationship to the numerous feminist texts that I encounter. More often than not, I am confronted with moments of perplexing dissonance when I realize that central feminist texts, that are often the touchstones of feminist philosophy, exclude identities like mine. Unfortunately, I am one among many women of color who share in this experience. However, works such as Gines' provide philosophers new tools, methods, and language with which to engage philosophy. It is for this reason that I consider Gines' piece a success at opening philosophical paths through new theoretical mergers that seek to accurately articulate the exclusions and voids of dominant philosophical discourse.

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