

On Sartre's 'Proper Usage' of Immoral Works in *Saint Genet*

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In 1952, Sartre published *Saint Genet*, which was originally written as a preface to Jean Genet's *Complete Works*. This long critical essay deserves to be read from various perspectives, but we should not forget the fact that in this period Sartre also developed his moral theory. (The notebooks he kept in this period were published as *Cahier pour une morale* (1983) after his death.) Some parts of *Saint Genet* are obviously based on the thoughts developed in the notebooks, and there we can find some clear development in Sartre's ethical thinking.

In this paper, I analyze *Saint Genet* from the perspective of Sartre's moral theory. Many think that Sartre's ethical philosophy gradually changes throughout his life, but how and when it changes remains poorly understood. To make clear the process of this change in the 1940s and 1950s is an important task for current Sartre studies [1].

The main aim of this paper is to analyze the development in Sartrean ethics in the light of Sartrean aesthetics through a study of *Saint Genet*. In this paper, I shall focus on how Sartre relates "the aesthetic" and "the moral," especially in terms of the morality of artworks. My aim is to bring out the interrelation between aesthetic value, artistic value, and moral value in Sartre's aesthetics, at least insofar as such a connection is discernible in the period from 1940 through to the 1950s [2]. This axiological analysis of Sartre's aesthetic theory would also provide another perspective for Sartre studies [3].

Before commencing my discussion, I would like to indicate the limit of this paper, whose focus is mainly on Sartre's understanding of Genet. Consequently, I intend to neither explore Genet's actual aesthetics or philosophy nor verify Sartre's interpretation of Genet [4]. This paper is a philosophical examination of Sartre's theory rather than literary research on Genet.

However, the results of this investigation should not be confined to the realm of Sartre studies. This paper aims to provide some hints for considering a general question in moral aesthetics: what effects are generated by describing evil actions from an evil position with recognition of their malevolence, and how should we evaluate such descriptions morally, aesthetically, and artistically? [5]

1. Jean Genet and *Saint Genet*

To begin with, we should familiarize ourselves with some historical facts about Jean Genet himself and Sartre's critical essay, *Saint Genet*.

Jean Genet was a French homosexual writer who was repeatedly arrested until into his thirties for stealing, drug trafficking, and male prostitution. His collection of poetry written in jail, *Le Condamné à Mort* (1945), and a novel, *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (1942), were highly

commended by Jean Cocteau, and this recommendation opened the way for Genet to establish himself as a new, unique writer in the French literary world. Genet still drifted into crime repeatedly, and in 1949, a prosecutor demanded a life sentence for him. Jean Cocteau and many influential people in the France's literary establishment petitioned the judge for mercy, and thanks to these efforts, Genet escaped the life sentence. After that, he wrote many dramas and novels that featured love, prostitution, stealing, and betrayal. Finally, a petition came from Sartre and other writers had the French President grant amnesty to Genet, as a result of which he was acquitted of all criminal charges.

Saint Genet (1952) is Sartre's critical essay, originally written as a preface for a projected *Complete Works* of Genet. The volume was so large (over 650 pages!) that, as a result, Volume I of this *Complete Works*, curiously, consists of only the preface.

The core points of Sartre's analysis are as follows:

- Genet had a complex about his origin, which was that of an illegitimate orphan. The fact that he was alienated from ordinary familial and social conventions was fundamental to his existence.
- In childhood, Genet was caught stealing his foster parent's wallet. The foster parent's accusatory words at that time—"You Are a Thief!"—strongly influenced Genet's character for a long time to come.
- According to Sartre, before 1952 Genet's character underwent three key metamorphoses. The first metamorphosis was the decision to be evil; the second was from an existence of evil to that of the dreaming man, who sublimates evil in his dream-like imagination (Sartre calls this "the conversion to an aesthete"); and the final metamorphosis was the conversion to a writer, becoming one of those who creates something in order to communicate his dreams to readers.

Saint Genet is not merely a critical essay that analyzes the text of Genet's books, nor does it analyze Genet's works purely in terms of his circumstances. Sartre analyzes the works from the existential point of view. That is, Sartre focuses on how Genet has overcome his unfortunate social situation through his choices and actions. In *Saint Genet*, Sartre attempts to reveal Genet's "original choice" (his existential freedom in creating his own life) by analyzing his life from his childhood, and, based on this analysis, Sartre demonstrates the importance and the role of his oeuvre [6].

2. On what view are Genet's works immoral?: Evil intentions and socially negative effects

How does Sartre read Genet's work? What value does Sartre believe Genet's works possess? These are the main question of this paper. In order to consider them, we have to see why Sartre considers Genet's work to be immoral. In this section, we focus on the issue of immorality. In the following section, we shall see the moral merits Genet's works possess.

From the outset, we encounter some important questions: Are Genet's works really immoral? If so, what form of immorality is it? The answer to these questions is not immediately

obvious. It is certain that in his works, many immoral characters (thieves and traitors) appear, but this fact does not imply the work's immorality. And Genet's works do not overtly *recommend* stealing or betrayal [7]. Moreover, as a historical fact, French society (at least until 1952) did not prohibit the publication of Genet's work, and Genet himself was not arrested for writing such books.

So should Genet's works be seen solely as skillfully rendered aesthetic works? Did Genet merely create beautiful writings, although their motifs are ostensibly evil?

Sartre rejects these views. According to him, Genet does not create merely beautiful art, so it is inappropriate to step back from Genet's more general appeal in order to appreciate only the formal features of his work: "So long as you play at amorality you will remain at the threshold of the work" (SG647/586).

Why is it inappropriate to appreciate only the aesthetic features of Genet's work? There are two main reasons. Firstly, it is because in presenting his work, Genet expresses his own standpoint. "[H]e never speaks to us *about* the homosexual, *about* the thief, but always *as* a thief and *as* a homosexual" (SG649/587). This position is significantly different from that of Proust (also homosexual), who wrote a story where a number of homosexual characters just appear. (In this sense, we may say that Genet's style has artistic values derived from its originality, sensationalism, or surprising effects.)

Secondly, Genet not only creates a story, but also presents it as an offering to his readers. According to Sartre, given the third "conversion" from an aesthete [8] to a writer, we should not only follow the text objectively, but also receive it as a present from one existent to another [9].

It should be noted that Sartre gives weight to the connection between the work and the writer. This connection between the works and the writer's intention and life leads Sartre to claim that it is an insufficient response to step back from Genet's message and read his books as mere fictions [10].

If the connection between the work and the writer's intention is established, Genet's works are open to a moral assessment that goes beyond a merely conventional aesthetic appreciation. It is because the author, in writing beautiful novels, attempts to express his very existence and offer his original philosophy to the public. The works are not just representations but the result of a project "*to make himself understood*" (SG473/425) and are the platforms from where he appeals to the public.

From this new perspective, we can establish reasons for viewing Genet's works as immoral. Sartre says that, firstly, what Genet created is an object through which we are forced to see Genet himself as a horrible and hateful person (SG540-3/487-490) [11]. By effectively utilizing the poetic power of his works, Genet forces us to understand his unconventional viewpoint and he attempts to disrupt and upset our traditional values. If Genet has such an evil intention, we have a reason to say that his works are immoral.

Secondly, as we read page after page, we find ourselves slipping into an attitude whereby we appreciate evil activities aesthetically. This is the intended effect of Genet's contrivance. We might have a reason to see Genet's works as immoral, because if that appreciation has an undermining effect on our moral views, it might "undermine the foundations of our society" (SG539/486) [12].

To sum up, Sartre views Genet's works as immoral because of Genet's evil intention to disrupt our morality and on account of the negative educational effect created through an aesthetic appreciation of his works.

3. Moral Values in Genet's Works: To realize "solidarity"

We should note, however, that Sartre does not see Genet's works as entirely immoral: he also finds some valuable moral features in them. Of course, we can find many aesthetic values in Genet's poetically embroidered text. But, beyond these, what moral values can we find in Genet's works?

3-1 Positive moral values for the author

Here, we should limit our discussion. Genet's works have many values. Amongst these, Sartre focuses on the value the creation of them has for Genet himself.

According to Sartre, Genet's creative activity is undertaken as part of his existential identity. As we saw earlier, the conversion to a writer was an important moment for him. This conversion opened up the chance to cease being a dreamy, imaginative, and alienated man. This conversion was a turning point that allowed the restoration of a connection between being a criminal and being a member of a social community, and to abandon an existence that had been alienated from society [13]. (Nevertheless, it is important that his aim was not to justify or apologize for his criminal past. We should not forget that Genet tries to get us to recognize his evil for what it is.) "[H]is aim was to force the Others to recognize his singularity" (SG480/432) [14].

3-2 The values that readers enjoy

This paper sets aside the values a writer holds [15]. Rather, I would like to focus on what kind of values readers can find in Genet's work.

We should now turn on to the last chapter of *Saint Genet*, entitled "Please Use Genet Properly" [16]. In the last chapter, Sartre claims that there is a "proper usage" for Genet's works, and in doing so, combats the fact that they were strongly criticized as scandalous novels at their time of publication.

From the moral point of view, what kind of value do Genet's works have? Let me answer partially before going into discussion in detail: the moral value of Genet's works consists in their cognitive value. That is, Genet's works expand our moral awareness.

But this is not to say that Genet's works are useful as a textbook or manual for confronting evil. Of course, we can derive from Genet's works some knowledge about criminal behavior and vocabulary in gay culture at that time in France. But Sartre's appraisal is not intended to provide answers for some social problems, or to be useful for socially alienated people.

What can we learn from Genet's works? To explain this, Sartre introduces the concept of "solitude." This "solitude" does not mean geographical solitude such as living on a deserted island, nor the type of social solitude that results from intentionally breaking down social intercourse. Of course, there is a genre of literature that represents a saintly solitude and tells us of its virtue, but such a theme is a classical and canonical one in literature. The significant value

of Genet's works does not consist in depicting such a noble and classical solitude.

The "solitude" Sartre considers here is another attitude, that is, the attitude of those who committed a crime and now recognize the disassociation between themselves and society, but recognize also that there is a reason that led them to that crime [17]. Although the solitary people understand the distance between social values and their values, they cannot help enduring their current situation. Sartre thinks that Genet is the man who embodies this solitude, and that his works present us with the solitary experience [18].

By representing such a solitary man, Genet's works impose a significant fact, that is, the fact that the immoral values of this solitary man are not irrelevant to readers. Sartre says that this solitude is "latent" in us (SG662). But what does it mean to say that a view is "not irrelevant to" and "latent in" us?

According to Sartre, the fact that Genet's works impose on us is that we cannot deny the possibility *for us* to assume Genet's values. It should however be noted here that those values are not presented there as ones that we might endorse hereafter. We do not need to accept nor endorse Genet's singular philosophy. The important fact is that his sense of values is not one that we necessarily would never have had. That is, what Genet's works forces us to recognize is the fact that now we would not fall into his situation and we would not accept nor endorse his values, but we cannot deny the possibility of having chosen such values ourselves.

By analyzing the life of Genet, Sartre reveals how Genet arrived at his situation and his values. From a balanced point of view, Genet's "solitude" is not one that we can pretend not to understand how it may have originated. In this sense, although Genet's situation is highly singular, it retains a sort of universality. To recognize this counterfactual possibility as *mine* is to gain cognition of myself and it is also to comprehend our possibility of choice in moral situations. From this reading, we gain a form of moral cognition. Therefore, although Genet's works are immoral in one aspect, in another aspect, they have also positive moral values.

To sum up, the moral value of Genet's works consists in broadening our self-awareness by presenting to us his singular values which we ourselves might have chosen.

4. Moral effects derived from an aesthetic appreciation of Genet's works

The fact that we can recognize this possibility does not imply that we should evaluate the work highly. The number of situations we might have arrived at are so innumerable that to know of alternative possibilities is not that significantly valuable, although to know future possibilities is somewhat valuable. Why should we thankfully accept the possible situation Genet presents to us?

Sartre thinks that the aesthetic feature of Genet's works has an important role here. In this section, I try to reveal the relation between the aesthetic experience and the moral value of Genet's works.

According to Sartre, it is not crucial just to *know* Genet's form of solitude, but to *realize* it [19]. Genet neither logically explains nor establishes the cause of the solitary position; he describes it poetically and brilliantly with beautiful metaphors and figures. Thanks to this contrivance, readers not only rationally understand the scenes, but also imaginatively appreciate

them, so that readers can *realize* and “live” the character’s solitude. Sartre finds the value of Genet’s works in this capacity to realize and experience that solitude, and thinks that to “use properly” Genet’s works derives from this capacity. That is, Sartre thinks that it is from this perspective that we can defend the apparent immorality of Genet’s writings.

What sort of experience is this “realization,” and how does it bring about expanded moral cognition? By poetically describing the burglars, or metaphorically representing homosexual love scenes with analogies of flowers, Genet evokes in us various complicated images. The characteristics of Genet’s technique consist neither in the detailed description, nor in the speedy change of scene, nor in the feeling of suspense in scenes of criminality. The main technique in his work is the capacity to evoke vivid images by means of saintly or botanical analogies so that the repulsion toward evil and ugliness is calmed. Admittedly, with this in mind, to read his books is a form of aesthetic experience. As characteristic examples, I cite here two metaphorical descriptions from Genet’s works:

“A cherry branch, borne up by the full flight of the pink flowers, surges all stiff and black from a vase” (SG516/464. Citation from *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*. Note that this is a description of a penis.)

“[The cop] makes of the Black Maria a carriage of exile, a coach wild with grandeur, slowly fleeing, when it carried me off, between the ranks of a people bowing in respect.” (SG380/341. This is a description of being bundled into a police van.)

Sartre claims the poetic effects of these descriptions do not function solely as an aesthetic merit, but also as a means of request from Genet to his readers to consider his moral perspective [20], and thus they possess persuasive, as well as aesthetic power [21]. (Provided we uphold Sartre’s earlier theory of the imagination, we may say that affectivity and kinetic feelings have an important role in the evocation of images.) [22]

However, the aesthetic experience of Genet’s works has one other important effect. The fact that we experience his works aesthetically compels us, in an unveiling manner, to find the nature of our morality. Let me explain in detail.

Sartre says normal people (Sartre calls them “the Just”) cannot aesthetically appreciate Genet’s works [23]. Adding to this claim, Sartre says about the works: “If they move me, that means they concern me. If they concern me, that means I can profit from them” (SG646/585). How should we understand these claims?

To understand them, I would like to introduce the notion of “imaginative resistance.” Imaginative resistance is the phenomenon where, under particular conditions, we cannot smoothly imagine a sort of state of affairs. The phenomenon of imaginative resistance had previously been suggested by philosophers such as Hume. Recently, many philosophers have refocused this phenomenon, and the discussion of its characteristics and causes are ongoing [24]. We can see the concept of imaginative resistance behind Sartre’s claims. According to *Saint Genet*, Sartre seems to think that if we try to imagine a moral attitude that is far from the imaginer, “resistance” occurs.

It is important that “resistance” is not a voluntary decision based on the understanding of immorality, but an *involuntarily occurring* response in the reader. So, what the reader learns here is not the validity of some form of moral thinking or moral judgment, but the nature of the ethical attitudes the reader implicitly holds.

According to Sartre's theory of the imagination, all aesthetic appreciation is based on our imaginative faculty. So if we cannot smoothly imagine the actions or characters' attitudes, we cannot appreciate the work, or at least that appreciation would be partially disturbed. Given this, from the fact that a reader could aesthetically appreciate Genet's works, it follows that the reader's morality is not so far from the attitudes described in the works. We can formalize the argument underlying here in this way:

- I [Presupposition 1] To aesthetically appreciate the works, the reader has to exercise own imagination (a basic thesis in Sartrean aesthetics).
- II [Presupposition 2] If the ethical view described there is far from the reader's, the reader's imagination is disturbed by the involuntary resistance response evoked in him or her. (The thesis of imaginative resistance.)
- III [Fact] We can aesthetically appreciate Genet's works.
- IV [From I and III] Our imaginative faculty was therefore sufficiently exercised.
- V [From II and IV] The ethical view described in the work was not far from our own [25].

In this way, the fact that we can aesthetically appreciate Genet's work imposes on us the undeniable conclusion that we must accept that the values of Genet's works are not irrelevant to us [26].

Three points should be noted here. Firstly, what this argument shows is, at best, that the ethical view described is not so far from that of the reader. That is, it does not follow from this argument that the reader implicitly holds the immoral view, nor that the reader feels sympathy to that immorality. Sartre seems to fully understand this limitation of the argument. He does not request readers to feel sympathy, nor to endorse Genet's philosophy, nor to experience identification with the characters in Genet's works [27].

Secondly, some philosophers indicate that great artworks, by making full use of artistic technique, can conjure up images of immoral scenes that transcend resistance [28]. Provided this notion is true, the fact that we can appreciate aesthetically an immoral scene does not actually imply that resistance does not occur. (On the formulation above, [II] and [IV] do not actually imply [V]. To lead to [V], [IV] have to imply that the resistance does not occur in our imagination; but, given the notion above, [IV] does not imply that.) Whether Sartre noticed this problem is not clear. In the last chapter of *Saint Genet*, Sartre seems to straightforwardly infer [V] from [II] and [IV].

However, since Sartre mentions everywhere in *Saint Genet* the feeling of aversion caused by Genet's works, he would not consider that everyone can smoothly imagine the scenes in Genet's writing. We can fairly say that Genet's works contain many disgusting descriptions and that Genet aims to create a response of aversion. We should not focus on the fact that we can aesthetically appreciate them, but on the fact that in some part, we can vividly imagine the disgusting scenes beyond our resistance. From the latter fact, it follows either that the resistance

did not occur or that the artistic technique was so excellent that we can imagine scenes beyond any resistance that may occur. In each case, since the resistance was little more than the one that we cannot go beyond, we can conclude that the ethics implied there was not one that we immediately reject. In the end, since we can say that Genet's artistic technique reveals the nature of our moral attitudes, our moral assessment of his works may not change.

There is a third point we should note. Can the moral merit generated through appreciative reading (that is, broadening our moral cognition) overcome the moral defect mentioned above (the potential undermining of society)? Unfortunately, this is not clear. Sartre himself does not explain how we should reconcile the discrepancy between the moral merit and defect. In effect, in the last chapter of *Saint Genet*, Sartre presents merely one new moral merit to counter the abundant criticism of Genet prevalent at the time in France [29].

To sum up, Genet's poetic contrivances, by having readers realize the moral values of solitary characters and by enabling readers to imagine evil attitudes beyond their imaginative resistance, effectively function to morally educate readers. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether this moral merit can overcome the moral defect of undermining society to the extent that we can forgive the vice in Genet's work.

Adding to this, we may draw a general lesson in moral aesthetics: by representing an unorthodox moral attitude together with descriptions of compelling reasons to arrive at that attitude, the works can have a moral value, and by aesthetically coloring the description, the cognition derived from its aesthetic appreciation may become more convincing [30].

5. On the relationship between “proper usage” and Genet's intentions

At the end of our discussion, I would like to indicate an important point. When Sartre offers a way to “use properly” Genet's work, he not only separates the works from Genet's intentions, but even does something opposite to them. In fact, Genet does not want any reading that draws some moral benefit from his works. Sartre himself registers this difference. He states: “[Genet] has never dreamed of making us better and he does not want us to profit from his instruction” (SG618/558).

Judging from a view that emphasizes the writer's intentions, Sartre's reading of Genet's works in the last chapter of *Saint Genet* is not based on a reading in keeping with Genet's purposes. It is, so to speak, an unauthorized reading. As we saw in Section 2, Sartre, based on the writer's intention, rejects the aesthetic-oriented reading of Genet's works. When Sartre draws some moral values from Genet, he encourages us to read against Genet's wishes.

The “proper usage” Sartre recommends is one from which we can draw benefit, but it is not a “proper” appreciation of the works, in the sense that the reading is clearly against the writer's intention. Therefore, it might not be clear whether the moral merit Sartre tries to draw from Genet's works can be justifiably attributed to the works themselves [31].

6. Conclusion and an outlook for Sartrean moral theory

According to Sartre, Genet's works possess the following characteristics:

1. Moral neutrality in terms of the representation of apparently evil characters (since there are abundant works featuring apparently evil characters).
2. Aesthetic and artistic merits of originality or curiosity in scenes where Genet represents the evil ethics as his own (but this artistic technique itself does not cause straightforwardly moral problems).
3. Moral defects stemming from Genet's evil intentions accompanying the depiction of certain scenes and characters, and the consequent negative effects on the value system of our society.
4. Moral merit in broadening readers' moral cognition in regard to the "solitary situation."
5. A persuasive power derived from the aesthetic merit of Genet's poetic skill.

It should be noted that it is not clear how the moral merit drawn from the reading opposite to the writer's intention could accommodate the work's immorality. In this sense, we would have to say that Sartre's argument is in part insufficient.

In addition to this specific analysis, I would like to say something from the broader perspective of Sartre studies. The discussion of this paper indicates that in the 1950s Sartre had been considering the way to understand a person's singularity. This consideration was not found in the ethics that Sartre tried to construct in the 1940s, since the ethics of that period was oriented in a form of human universality. By developing this consideration of singularity, Sartre opens another aspect of his moral theory. That is, he starts to see each human as "the universal singularity." In this sense, we could see the consideration of a person's existence in *Saint Genet* as an important turning point in Sartre's philosophy [32].

Notes

- [1] Researchers of Sartre often use the category of "the first ethics" and "the second ethics." The former refers to the moral theory in the second half of the 1940s, and the latter refers to that of the 1960s (Anderson 1993). This paper might give some hints as to considering the difference between the two.
- [2] Takeuchi analyses *Saint Genet* in chapter 7, entitled "Beauty and Evil: on Saint Genet [in Japanese, Bi to Aku: Sartre no Genet-ron ni tsuite]" in Takeuchi (1967). Takeuchi rightly indicates that Sartre easily connects evil and beauty in terms of non-existence and anti-nature. The aim of Takeuchi there is to analyze the action or behavior of Genet and the characters in Genet's works. Compared to this, my aim in this paper is to consider the behavior of Genet *as a writer* and the value of his works.
- [3] For the influence from ethics to art theory in Sartre's philosophy after World War II, see Mori (Forthcoming).
- [4] Many researches indicate that Sartre's analysis of Genet is historically incorrect. For excellent historical research on Genet, see White (1993).
- [5] Recently, many aestheticians have written papers on the interrelations among aesthetic, moral, and artistic values. See Gaut (2007) and the chapter 12 titled "Interaction: Ethical, Aesthetic, and Artistic Value" of Stecker (2010).
- [6] Although *Saint Genet* is positioned as one of the most fruitful results of existential analysis, its way of analysis is often criticized. For it is not obvious whether there is "original choice" at the base of

our activity, and whether it is appropriate to analyze artworks from the perspective of the artist's original choice. For the relation between the original choice and morality, see Jopling (1992). Simont (1992) and Mouillie (2011) give a good perspective on the development of Sartre's ethics.

- [7] “[H]e does not say that one should steal. Quite the contrary, he knows that it is wrong of him to steal and it is in order to be wrong that he steals. But he does not even ask us to be wrong: he asks us nothing at all” (*Saint Genet* p. 646/585. Hereafter SG.) The page number in the French text is followed by the page number in the English translation. In some citation, I have slightly changed the translation.)
- [8] “[An aesthete’s] aim is to reduce the universe and man himself to the simple play of an imagination” (SG415–6/372).
- [9] “Genet, who offered himself to the readers as an object, suddenly transforms himself, as soon as they have opened the book, into a subject, for the imaginary world which closes up about them, and which is *this* world become nightmare, shows the readers that it has an author” (SG610/551).
- [10] “Let there be no misunderstanding: it is not a matter of saving his life by making it the occasion for a beautiful book, the object of a beautiful song, but of dissolving it entirely in the magnifying song” (SG576/519).

Sartre never accepts the view of new criticism, which claims that we should separate art from the artists. This comes about as a natural result of Sartre's “literature of engagement.” In this paper, I shall not deal further with the relation between the author, the fictional works, and the custom of fictional literature. (Milman 1991b deals with this relation from the perspective of Sartre's drama theory, although his analysis is confined to Sartre's view in the 1940s.) But it should be noted that provided Genet's aims, the circumstance of sexual culture in France in 1940s, and the scandalous nature of Genet's works at the time, we cannot see Genet's description of evil and the sexual scene as ones of picaresque literature such as *Macbeth* or of film-noir such as *In Cold Blood*.

- [11] “There are wild objects which embody persons. When one produces one of these object, one is an artist, and when this object arouses horror, one is a criminal to boot” (SG543/489).
- [12] It should be noted that whether a work is produced from an evil intent and whether a work produces an educationally negative effect are independent affairs. Whether the work is immoral and whether it should be censored or banned are also questions at different levels. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether Sartre clearly distinguishes these questions in seeing Genet's works as immoral.

The question whether it is also an immoral activity to aesthetically appreciate evil is one of the major questions in moral aesthetics, but Sartre did not seem to clearly express his view on this issue. I also would like to remain open in regard to the answer to this question.

- [13] Sartre sees here a sort of therapeutic value (SG602/544).
- [14] Sartre understands Genet's works as “[a]n inquiry by Genet as to his potentialities” and as “a valid method of investigation” (SG621/562).
- [15] For the analysis of Genet himself and *Saint Genet* from this point of view, see White (1993).
- [16] Ringer (2000) says that this last chapter of *Saint Genet* is “an epilogue” (p. 34). Nevertheless, I would like to focus on this chapter, since I think that from there, we can draw out Sartre's important argument in regard to moral aesthetics.
- [17] “[S]olitude is a certain aspect of our relationship to all, and this aspect is manifested by certain types of behavior which we adopt toward society” (SG652/590). “Being a negation, [solitude] is the negative of our loves, of our actions, of our personal or political life. It is neither subjectivity, in the strict sense of the word, nor objectivity, but the relationship between the two when it is experienced as a failure. It is born within communication itself, as poetry is within all prose, because the most clearly expressed and understood thoughts conceal an incommunicable element: I can make them be conceived as I conceive them but am unable to make them live as I live” (SG653/591); “One is alone when one has a fault and a reason *at the same time*: when one declares oneself right as subject—because one is conscious and lives and because one cannot and will not deny what one

- has willed—and when one declares oneself wrong as object because one cannot reject the objective condemnation of all of society” (SG654/592).
- [18] “[T]he universal and incommunicable experience which [the books of Genet] offer to all as individuals is that of solitude” (SG651/589).
- [19] “But awareness of [the solitude] is not enough; you must live it, must therefore make it” (SG654/592).
- [20] “Beauty is the project itself become exigency” (SG423/379); “Beauty is the law of organization of the imaginary world, the only one that establishes an order and subdues the part to the whole *without being good*” (SG424/381); “[B]eauty presents itself as an absolute end: it is the free appeal that creative freedom addresses to all other freedoms” (SG551/496–497).
- [21] “If Genet’s fictions have sufficient power, they will compel recognition” (SG557/502). For the power of conviction which beauty has in Sartre’s aesthetics (especially for his view among 1940s), see Milman (1991a).
- [22] For the relation between aesthetic appreciation and dreaming, see Mori (2012).
- [23] “[I]n accepting [Genet] the just change, for one cannot be perfectly just and *at the same time* read his criminal works” (SG631/571).
- [24] It was Moran (1994) and Walton (1994) who opened the contemporary discussion of imaginative resistance. Recently many philosophers discuss this phenomenon in connection with philosophy of mind and current research in psychology. See Gendler (2000) and Stokes (2006).
- [25] Sartre arrives at this conclusion because he sees the cause of imaginative resistance in the distance between the moral attitude of the character depicted and that of the reader.[V]. But if, as Walton (1994) proposes, we see the cause of imaginative resistance in whether the reader can endorse the ethical view depicted, the conclusion [V] would change. In that case, the conclusion would be that the ethical view described in the work was not one that we cannot endorse.
- [26] “Poetic trap will captivate his freedom and will reflect it to him as being half his own and half alien. He will be forced to see himself and will be able neither to *recognize* himself nor reject himself” (SG549/495); “Genet holds the mirror up to us: we must look at it and see ourselves” (SG662/599).
- [27] Of course, it is not impossible to empathize or sympathize with characters in Genet’s works. Sartre himself says, “Let us try to understand, that is, to sympathize” (SG141/121). But what is attempted there, broadly speaking, is to *imaginatively* sympathize to them. That is, we do not appreciate the works with sympathy from the heart. I do not commit to the view that we should appreciate picaresque literature in terms of “the original vice which all human beings internally holds” (Takeuchi 1967) or the sympathy evoked from this original vice. Nishimura (1993, 315–6) rightly criticizes such a view.
- [28] Cf. Stokes (2006).
- [29] The fact that Sartre calls the ethics of Genet “the ethics of generosity” and indicates the limit of such an ethics, seems to be important point in considering the development of Sartre’s ethics (SG639–644/578–583).
- [30] This is the claim that to describe evil can enhance the value of the works. Recently, this view is labeled *immoralism*. But it should be noted here that if the description is made with the intention of providing enhanced moral important cognition, the work could be rather morally meritorious. We cannot see it being the case that description of vice enhance the the value of the work.
- [31] If we adopt the view that in appreciating works we should place more emphasis on the intention we can hypothetically derive from the description rather than the writer’s actual intention, we might see Sartre’s theory about the “proper usage” of Genet’s works as legitimate. In fact, some recent aestheticians support such a *hypothetical intentionalism* (see Levinson 1996). Nevertheless, it has been indicated that such a view has problems. For example, it is not clear whether this view can secure a legitimate interpretation from many arbitrary ones and justify the reading’s legitimacy. (For the problems concerning hypothetical intentionalism, see Chapter 7 of Stecker (2010). Stecker

himself adopts the position called *moderate actual intentionalism*). Especially in a case such as Sartre's interpretation, that is, the case where his interpretation is clearly against the author's intention, the justification of his reading might be difficult.

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