show how Sartre has subtly changed Marxist class theory. Similarly, in his discussion of Sartre’s often controversial political engagements, Drake tends to minimize Sartre’s failures and miscalculations. For example, he does not mention that it later came to light that the RDR, an organization involving Sartre, as well as many others, had been used by the CIA, which had funneled money to it through American trade unions in a bid to undermine the CPF.

That said, Drake’s book deserves to be recommended as a useful teaching tool as well as a very readable quick guide to the life of the French iconoclast Jean-Paul Sartre. Of all the guides to Sartre’s life published in 2005 to commemorate the centenary of the philosopher’s birth (I can count at least a dozen biographies and biographical essays published in English and French), this is undoubtedly the clearest. That alone would make reading it worthwhile.

KEVIN GRAY, Université Laval

*Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics*

CHRISTINE DAIGLE, Editor
Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006; x + 200 pages.

Composed of eight papers on different existentialist thinkers, the texts that make up *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics* attempt to show the nature of the ethical thinking that is central to existentialism while opposing relativism, which all of these authors seem to think haunts the existentialist project. In many ways, Christine Daigle makes the question of finding an ethical base for existentialism more challenging by choosing to define existentialism as an evolution of nineteenth-century *Existenzphilosophie* that became disenchanted with rationality and chose to emphasize the centrality of human existence to philosophy. As with any collection of papers, some of the texts in this volume are stronger than others. The essays appear in roughly chronological order in the book, starting with Kierkegaard and ending with Merleau-Ponty. (There is, curiously enough, no mention of Gabriel Marcel, beyond a reference to him in Daigle’s introduction as the philosopher who coined the term existentialism.)

Of the stronger papers, Dominic Desroches begins the book with a reading of Søren Kierkegaard, attempting to show how Kierkegaard’s teleological suspension of the ethical can be seen as a rebellion against the linguistic realm that constitutes traditional ethics. Putting Kierkegaard’s thought in opposition to Hegel, Desroches first argues that the
former stands opposed to the latter's dialectical thought, even if Kierkegaard's own thought is in some way dialectical. He then shows, in a linguistic and Husserlian reading of the teleological suspension of the ethical, that God's testing of Abraham and Job must be a transcendent activity, one that bypasses any possible Kantian ethics.

In another strong paper, Todd Lavin tries to show that Heidegger, in spite of the obvious spectre haunting his thought, still has a number of things to offer the contemporary ethical and political philosopher. Lavin's thesis is that "only in and through collective social action can Dasein win its own self" (53); the ethical, in other words, appears only through the concretely social. To prove his point, Lavin tries to show that it is necessary to reread Being and Time to avoid what he terms the "reification of the They" (54)—Heidegger's choice to understand social relations on a more abstract level. In order to do this, Lavin makes the curious choice to turn to the work of the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. I say that this is a curious choice as a more mainstream, and in many ways more detailed, attempt to reconcile Marxism and existentialism is given by Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse might have been a better choice, as he actually studied with Heidegger and wrote extensively on the question. Lavin's only mention of Marcuse comes when he briefly cites Marcuse's famous line that capitalism renders the masses inert by offering them an antenna on every house, a transistor radio on the beach, and a jukebox in every car or restaurant (57). Engaging with Sartre's later Marxist writings would have been beneficial for Lavin's text and would have better situated Lavin's essay in the volume as a whole.

In his interesting exegetical contribution, Stephen Schulman takes the difficult and unusual path of trying to show that Heidegger's student, Hannah Arendt, belongs both to the existentialist and ethicist camps. He does this by first stressing, contrary to the standard analysis, that Arendt did have a normative ethical theory, one that is in many ways existentialist, if by an existentialist ethics we understand an ethics without rules. In a similar vein, Philip Knee gives a unique reading of Camus' thought. Knee shows the similarities between Camus' thought and that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, arguing that what separates Camus from Sartre, and makes him closer to Rousseau, is his emphasis on measure and his rejection of excessive rationalism in ethics, a strain of thought Knee finds in L'homme révolté.

In Daigle's essay on de Beauvoir and Sartre, she argues that de Beauvoir's philosophy was the more developed of the two. While it is generally conceded that de Beauvoir was the better memoirist, and that some of Sartre's writing was rewritten or substantially reworked by his partner, the contention that de Beauvoir's ethics was the more developed of the two rests on a number of assumptions that required a non-
standard reading of the existentialist corpus: first, the importance of an emphasis on the body, and second, the de-emphasizing of the political. This second point is particularly problematic. Daigle contributes a closing text to the volume wherein she argues that by examining the ethical pretensions of existentialism we arrive at the political aims of the movement. Similarly, the essay by Kym Maclaren tackles the thought of Merleau-Ponty and argues, following the first of Daigle’s assumptions, for the importance of the body and that a study of embodiment would give rise to an ethics. This ethic is a kind of virtue ethics, but one that sees embodiment as yielding a genuine existentialist commitment to others.

The essays on Friedrich Nietzsche and on Jean-Paul Sartre are not particularly strong. In his essay, David W. Goldberg attempts to show that there is a Nietzschean solution to the problem of relativism, and that we can dismiss once and for all the accusation of moral relativism levelled against the existentialist. This problem, however, has been shown repeatedly to be little more than an ad hominem attack levelled against the existentialists by their adversaries. While other parts of Goldberg’s discussion are interesting, a section rebutting Nietzsche’s supposed antisemitism (again, something already well addressed in the literature) takes up far too much of the text.

The weakest essay in the volume is Glenn Braddock’s contribution, wherein he addresses what he describes as a contradiction between Sartre’s pronounced atheism and the statement in L’existentialisme est un humanisme wherein Sartre says that “even if God did exist, that would change nothing” (91). Braddock’s attempt to show that these two positions are contradictory is unconvincing; Sartre never intended for L’existentialisme est un humanisme to be his final word on anything, let alone on the question of religion.

Unfortunately, the book is marred by poor editing. The book undoubtedly presents a challenge as some of the essays were translated from French, in most cases by graduate students. Philosophers are best suited to translate works of philosophy, of course, provided that professional editors supervise the translation. This second task seems to have been wholly ignored by McGill-Queen’s University Press. The book is replete with badly turned phrases, grammatical mistakes, and books cited with oscillating titles (for instance, Existentialism is a Humanism is sometimes referred to as The Humanism of Existentialism).

Overall, this book provides an original and valuable, if uneven, contribution to the field.

KEVIN GRAY, Université Laval