

Sartre's 'Being Looked at' and Consciousness in the Jewish Ghetto, Vilnius

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This article explores the relationship between consciousness and the historical urban space of the former Jewish Ghetto in Vilnius, Lithuania. This relationship is investigated primarily within the existentialist school of philosophy and takes its point of departure from Sartre's 'gaze' or 'look' from his philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*. Within this existentialist schematic the 'look' is methodologically sub-divided into i) 'being looked at' and ii) the 'look looked at'. This paper further discerns the nuances of consciousness within the field of phenomenology in terms of upsurges and decompressions when 'being looked at' in the Ghetto. That is, when walking its streets and 'being seen' by, and through the Ghetto's windows. Subject is primarily understood as subdivided into Self, 'I' and 'me', thus rendering it as carrying a non-stable first-person perspective.

Keywords: Sartre, existentialism, consciousness, Jewish Holocaust, Vilnius-Ghetto

INTRODUCTION

Someone in a tallis is walking over your rooftops,

Only he is stirring in the city by night. – Moyshe Kulbak, *Vilne* (Kulbak 1997: 17).

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The gazed-at gazes at the

Gazer – Zygmunt Bauman, *Moral Blindness* (Bauman, Donskis 2013: 3).

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Sartre's 'gaze' or 'look' from his philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), has been redeployed within a number of frameworks, namely as Gaze theory (Laue 2018; Woolen 2007), within psychoanalytical theory (Sharma, Barua 2017) and feminist philosophy (Murphy 1987). It has also been situated within a variety of circumstances. However, none have redeployed Sartre's gaze within the confines of a former Jewish Ghetto. In this paper, a substratum of Sartre's 'look' is focused on within the parameters of the former Jewish Ghetto in Vilnius, Lithuania; that is, the 'being looked at' and following this the 'look looked at'. Sartre's schematic is thus re-activated within the *living city*, in this case Vilnius, and in this sense it

is enough to recall Simmel's essay *Die Grosstädte und das Geistesleben* [*The Metropolis and Mental Life*, 1903]; Thomas Mann's essay *Lübeck als geistige Lebensform* [*Lübeck as a Spiritual Way of Life*, 1926]; and later, in Lithuanian letters, Tomas Venclova and Czesław Miłosz's epistolary dialogue *Vilnius kaip dvasinio gyvenimo forma* [*Vilnius as a Spiritual Way of Life*, 1978]. This is to say that a city becomes a form of life and thought, something in which 'history, architecture, music, and power, memory, encounters between people and ideas, politics, books, identities, and creeds all speak out' (Bauman, Donskis 2013: 2). Indeed, a particular city may dominate a consciousness, just as I. Calvino's 'Venice' finds its way into his descriptions of all cities (Calvino 1997). Furthermore, in A. Tanpınar's work, *Beş şehir* [*Five Cities*], a city is an entity that *reveals* itself (Tanpınar 2018), or is an *active force*, as G. Rodenbach has it in his work, *Bruges-la-Mort* [*Death-of-Bruges*] (Rodenbach 2008). The city is dynamic for Derrida, by its very 'power to illuminate' (Derrida 1978: 5).

Furthermore, and within the scope of this enquiry consciousness is seen as an entity that confers existence, though not necessarily the root of *cogito*, especially not for Sartre who rejects the Cartesian *cogito* as reflective and instead insists on the pre-reflective as the primary source of consciousness. Although a philosophical debate that is beyond the scope of these pages, this paper will redeploy consciousness in both a pre-reflective and reflective manner. Consciousness, moreover, is a paradigm of existence, and it is existence that gives existentialism its platform of understanding, its point of departure; that is, of *existence before essence*. Indeed, consciousness, as absolute interiority, has to be consciousness of something, according to Husserl (Husserl 1982: 46), and consciousness of an urban space is a consciousness of urban *situations*. That is, situations pertaining to the intricate phenomena of effect/emotion, materiality, immateriality, and human subjectivity (Lees; Baxter 2011).

It is worth remembering, lastly, that a feeling of angst, alienation and of ennui, or nausea is attendant on the subject in existentialist thought (Sartre 2001), and not least because of a human being's 'unbearable burden of freedom, of openness to death and of the consciousness of its own finitude' (Bauman, Donskis 2013: 202). Nonetheless, this paper pays particular attention to the 'crisis of self'. In brief, subject cannot arguably be sure of Self, nor therefore of 'I', or 'me'. Indeed, and as Metzinger notes, 'the instantiation of a stable first-person perspective turns out to be rare, graded, and dynamically variable properties of human beings' (Metzinger 2015).

BEING-LOOKED-AT

A look is very different from what one might think, it has neither light nor expression nor movement, it is silent, but from the heart of the strangeness its silence crosses worlds and the person who hears that silence is changed – Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence* (Blanchot 1948: 27).

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A walk into the Ghetto can begin on its outskirts; that is on Pylimo gatvė [street]. The buildings on either side of this street appear as a series of imprecise structures, some of the buildings, which are stores, have large front windows. This long street in part skirts the Senamiestis [Old Town] of Vilnius within which the Jewish Ghetto is located. The following locations and directions can be situated and followed on any simple map of the Senamiestis in Vilnius. From Pylimo, apartment block 22, you can walk a little further down the street where there is the Jewish bakers. Walking up the street from number 22, and across Trakų gatvė

there is a turning on the left called Lydos gatvė. This is one entrance into the Great Vilnius Ghetto (Ghetto I).¹ Turn into this street and walk halfway down.

From Sartre's perspective, subject, this 'I' could now be looking at this street's numerous windows, the 'eyes' of the dwellings. It is as if these 'eyes' are watching Self, defining 'me'. It is a certain look emitted from the windows. Suddenly the possibility of an upsurge in consciousness: Self's connection without distance with this part of the Ghetto is stripped of its transcendence by the very fact that it is a look looked-at. 'I' am 'fixing' this street into an object; Self is in relation to it as this Ghetto Street is in relation to 'me'. 'My' look furthermore simply manifests a relation in the midst of the Ghetto, a relation of myself to the looked-at – something like the attraction which 'two masses exert over one another at a distance' (Sartre 2003: 266). The Ghetto's presence to the world is simultaneous with Self's presence. Indeed, subject is thrown into the universal present insofar as the Ghetto makes itself be a presence to subject. Through its look, object-forming subject is now an existence fixed in the midst of the Ghetto 'as irremediable' (Sartre 2003: 268).

From Sartre's standpoint, and through its windows, and as the Ghetto looks at 'me', it delivers 'me' to myself as 'unrevealed but without revealing...[itself]' (Sartre 2003: 269). The Ghetto which is present nevertheless remains out of subject's flight. 'My' existence is rather caught in a flow of the world toward another world which is the same world and yet lacks communication with it. 'My' existence haunts this flow not as an unequivocal being but as temporarily fixed and made part of the world that is never more in attendance than when paradoxically 'I' am not aware of it. This Ghetto's look touches 'me', and 'I' am looked-at in a ghetto that is looked-at. That is, its look is a look-looking and not a look looked-at. As such, it denies 'my' space from its windows and unfolds its own distances. 'I' am in the ghetto, *but not of it*.

Back on Pylimo gatvė. Walk ahead a minute or so and arrive at Žemaitijos gatvė, another entry point into the Ghetto. This street was formerly known as Mattityahu Strashun gatvė. Books from the M. Strašūnas collection laid the foundation for the greatest library of Judaism in Europe, created in Vilnius in 1892. The library was destroyed along with the Great Synagogue.

Continue walking on for another minute or two and arrive at Ligoninės gatvė, a third entry point into the ghetto.

Looking down the cobbled street, 'I' see a row of apartment windows. A particular 'I' may even recollect Kaczerginski's haunting Yiddish lullaby from the Vilna Ghetto: *Shtiler, Shtiler* [*Quiet, Quiet*]. Here there is the possibility of an upsurge of consciousness. It is as if this street's windows come searching for Self so as to constitute a 'me' at a certain distance from them. Self experiences itself as looked-at, as subject's consciousness is plunged by its look into the heart of a Ghetto complete with its distances and its instruments. Such is the Ghetto's look when subject experiences the Ghetto 'as a look' (Sartre 2003: 297). As its window's 'look' at subject, furthermore, its meaning is never given. Its presence to subject as the *ghetto-comme-un-regarder* [*ghetto-as-a-look*] is neither a knowledge nor a projection of subject's

¹ This area existed from 6 September 1941 until 19 September 1943, within the boundaries of Lydos, Rūdninkų, Mėsinių, Ašmenos, Žemaitijos, Dysnos, Šiaulių and Ligoninės Streets. There were around 30,000 Jews living in it; most of them were murdered in Ponary or Paneriai. Indeed, up to 70,000 people were killed in Ponary during the massacres of the Second World War, most of them were Jews. It represents the Europe's largest location of mass killings where victims were shot. After the restoration of Lithuania's Independence, the Vilnius Ghetto liquidation day, September 23, became the day of the Jewish Genocide in Lithuania.

being in the midst of Vilnius, nor a form of unification nor a category. It simply *is* and subject cannot derive it from itself.

In a Sartrean sense, the Ghetto is teaching Self in the form of a 'me' who 'I' am. 'I' does not recognise itself and yet knows that it is 'me', or more accurately Self thinks that it knows itself. Or does it? For paradoxically, and as the Ghetto teaches 'I' who 'I' am, 'I' does not recognise itself and yet knows that 'it is me' (Sartre 2003: 298). Thus, 'myself' is neither knowledge nor a unity of knowledge but an uneasiness, an anxiety, a lived wrenching away from the unity of Self, a limit that 'I' cannot reach and which yet 'I' am. This Ghetto space through which this 'me' comes to 'myself' is neither understanding nor category but the fact of the presence of a mystery. In fact, this type of wrenching away from myself and the upsurge of the Ghetto's presence are one: 'one can intuit them and live them at the same moment' (Sartre 2003: 298). The Ghetto does not appear to subject as a ghetto that is constituted first so as to encounter subject later; it appears most importantly as a look which arises in an original relation of *être avec* [*being with*] subject. Of course, the Ghetto is not actually looking at subject. Yet the difficulty can be expressed in these terms: as the world of this Ghetto manifests its presence, subject apprehends in itself a certain *être regardé* [*being-looked-at*] which refers subject to this Ghetto. Subject is experiencing being looked at, then experiencing its own look at the Ghetto. At this point the surge of consciousness is more or less over. Reflective decompression follows.

Back out and onto Pylimo gatvė, the outline of the dome of the Choral Synagogue is visible ahead. Walk ahead for a couple of minutes and come to the synagogue at Pylimo 5, which is on the other side of the road. The Choral Synagogue is the only synagogue in Vilnius that survived the Second World War without a considerable damage. Before World War Two there were around 135 synagogues in Vilnius, with the city known in Yiddish, as noted above, as *Yerushalayim d'Lita* [Jerusalem of Lithuania]. These synagogues served as prayer houses and educational and community centres.²

Looking directly across at the synagogue:

'I' now apprehend the synagogue as a well-known landmark in this part of Vilnius. What does this signify? In brief, it is to register an organised portrait of a major building without distance of the things in 'my' universe around that privileged object. One is dealing with a relation which is without parts, given at one brush stroke, inside of which there unfolds a spatiality which is not 'my' spatiality. For instead of a grouping toward subject of the building, there is now an orientation which flees from subject in a pre-reflective moment of consciousness; an iconic building seen initially at a relatively short distance from subject, but which escapes subject inasmuch as it subsequently unfolds about itself its own space. In other words, there is a total space which is grouped around the synagogue. And this space is made with subject's space; there is a regrouping in which 'I', as a floating signifier, take part, but which escapes the 'me', a *regrouping* of the building which is now part of this subject's universe. This regrouping 'does not stop there' (Sartre 2003: 255). The surroundings of the synagogue are something qualified, with its mix of modern and traditional architecture. It is this background that exists *for the Choral Synagogue*. In this sense, the very quality of this existence, the insertion of the synagogue into its surrounding buildings, is in direct relation to the synagogue itself. 'I' apprehend the relation of the backdrop to the synagogue as an objective relation, yet 'I' cannot

² The prayer house of the Choral Synagogue was designed by architect Dovydas Rozenhauzas and was opened during the Jewish New Year in 1903. There is an area on the second floor of the Mauritanian-style synagogue dedicated to women and the choir.

apprehend the backdrop as it seemingly *appears to the synagogue*. Thus, suddenly, in an upsurge of consciousness the appearance of the synagogue has abruptly stolen the world from subject. Everything is in place; everything still exists for subject; but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of this object, the Choral Synagogue. The appearance of the synagogue in the world corresponds therefore to a *decentralisation of the world* which undermines the *centralisation* which 'I' am 'simultaneously effecting' (Sartre 2003: 279). In short, 'I' as floating signifier continues to hover. 'I', however, continues to galvanise 'me', particularly in pre-reflective upsurges of consciousness, but in the pre-reflective upsurges there is doubt, there is slippage. It is an 'I' with a singularity of consciousness, yet a singularity that conveys significations in denotations and figurative meanings *with other*, a circumscribed signification.

If you walk ahead for a minute or two, you will arrive at the corner of Pylimo and Rūd-ninkų gatvė. Walk down Rūd-ninkų for a few minutes and, finally, into the Ghetto proper:

To the right you may see on a wall on the other side of the street the sign marking No. 18. This marks the place where the main entrance to the *Great Ghetto* was once located (now a Pizza eatery). The spot is further marked by a memorial plaque on the wall with the Ghetto's layout. Walk across the small square with its benches, grassed area, and paved walkway and arrive outside the *Jewish Information Centre* on the cobbled Mėsinų gatvė. There, a group of enlarged photographs of the Ghetto from the early 1940's is fixed on metal stands. One monochrome picture is of German soldiers active at the same main entrance gate to the Ghetto taken in 1941. To the right is a statue of Zemach Shabad, a Jewish doctor who gave his time to charity work, community health care, education and journalism. The information centre sits partly on the corner of Dysnos gatvė. 'I' could look down it and notice the cobbled streets' eyes: its windows. If you walk down this street for half a minute, you will come to Ašmenos gatvė (The letter š is pronounced in Lithuanian as 'sh,' like in sheep). This street's windows at this point offer a somewhat blank, complete expression, and remain there as part of the Ghetto's *Dasein [existence]*. Turning around, retracing one's steps, and once again walking past the statue of the Jewish doctor, it is a short way to the corner of Šiaulių gatvė. Turn into this street, walk down it for a minute or so and you will arrive at the corner of Žemaitijos gatvė:

Between the Ghetto's look and 'me', 'I' would apprehend an undeniable relation without space. The Ghetto has closed in on itself. There remains, however, a full object for subject to grasp, an animated space. In the midst of the Ghetto, one can simply say that it is *regarder dehors [looking out]*, just as one could simply state a commonplace such as 'wintry, wet weather' or 'cold, dank morning'. 'I' apprehend an enclosed urban space, a historical conurbation in which its look forms the essential quality. Moreover, the relation of this part of the Ghetto to its look is a small, 'particular crack in my universe' (Sartre 2003: 256). However, this does not enable 'me' to leave the level on which the Ghetto is an object. If the Ghetto is, at this moment, in connection with the world as the object that subject sees, then subject's fundamental connection with the Ghetto *as object* must be able to be referred back to subject's permanent possibility of being seen by the Ghetto; that is, a possibility arising from the Ghetto *as subject*.

Furthermore, every look directed towards subject from the windows of this part of the Ghetto is manifested in connection with the appearance of a sensible form in subject's perceptive field. Yet it is not connected with any determined form. As Sartre noted, a look will be given just as well on occasion when there is a 'rustling of branches', or the 'sound of a footstep followed by silence', or 'the slight opening of a shutter' (Sartre 2003: 281). To be sure, if one were to walk the short distance to this spot, at times one ceases to perceive its windows. The windows are there, they remain in the field of one's perception, but 'I' do not

make any use of them, the Ghetto's windows are neutralised, put out of play. The windows become disconnected. It is the same with Vilnius as a whole. It is never when its windows are looking at 'me' that 'I' can find their shape, that this self-consciousness can remark on their form – be they large office buildings of toughened glass, 'curtain walling', where buildings are entirely clad in glass, 'planar' glazing, where the glass is attached by bolts or vacuum pads, or multi-paned sash windows; or windows with stone mullions, or the simple grid-like arrangements of the 18th-century, or double-glazed windows in UPVC frames. That is to say, the look of the city, the look of Vilnius, indeed of Riga, of Tallinn, hides its windows; it seems to go *in front of them*. This illusion stems from the fact that its windows as objects of subject's perception remain at a precise distance which unfolds from subject to them. In other words, 'I' am viewed from the windows without any distance, but they are detached from the place where 'I find myself', whereas the gaze is upon 'me' without distance while at the same time, it *gathers* 'me' at a distance. In short, its immediate presence to 'me' *reveals a space which at the same time detaches me from it*. 'I' cannot therefore *direct* my thoughts on the gaze without at the same time causing 'my' awareness to crumble and fade away, to 'decompose and pass into the background' (Sartre 2003: 282). Additionally, the look of Vilnius is revealed to 'me' across the uneasy indetermination of the being which 'I' am for the city. 'I' am as if a shadow that is projected on a virtual screen such that no computations can be made for the distortions resulting from this screening. For Vilnius, one is a being without a unified tonal range. Yes, in an urban portrait with the city, but in an urban picture without flowing lines, without pose and harmony. And yet paradoxically 'I' remain *paired* with the city. I *sense* Vilnius' windows, buildings, roads, vehicles, vendors, awnings and streetlamps. All are for 'me' objects. Indeed, there is a twin upsurge in consciousness in which the city, to use Sartre's words, is as an '*être-en-couple-avec-l'autre*' [*being-in-a-pair-with-the-other*] (Sartre 2003: 277), paired in an existence with 'me', with Self as an object-forming subject.

A set of darkened windows above a local bar, *Šnekutis*:

Thus far, the impact of the look of the Ghetto is that subject is transcended. Self, and its 'I' is still its possibilities, but at the same time the Ghetto's look alienates Self from its 'me', from its 'I'. Nevertheless, the alienation of subject, which is an aspect of being-looked-at by the Ghetto, involves at once the alienation of the world which object-forming subject continues to organise. Such is this potential moment of consciousness for the subject.

Turn right and walk along Šv. Mikalojaus gatvė and onto Vokiečių gatvė [German Street], the non-ghetto street bisecting the two ghetto areas. Now outside of the Ghetto, walk across the street, then turning right walk up Vokiečių for a minute or so before turning left onto the long Didžioji gatvė that leads down to the Cathedral. City Hall with its impressive columns sits to the right. Walk a little way down until Stiklių gatvė on the left.

THE LOOK LOOKED-AT

*Vilna, my great grandmother, metropolis of the Jewish nation,
Jerusalem of exile, consolation of the ancient folk in their Northern abode!* – Zalman Shneour,
Vilna (Shneour 1923: 6).

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I live not in myself, but I become

Portion of that around me – Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, III (Byron 1985: 32).

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Your narrow and bent streets

*With their dangerously unsafe pavements
And their small old houses
Tell the tales of the past – Sore Reyzen, Vilne (Grossman 1925: 22).*

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Enter Stiklių gatvė and you are once again in the Jewish Ghetto, this time in the *Small Ghetto* (Ghetto II):

During the 17th and 18th centuries, and in this part of central Vilnius, the intersection of Stiklių, Žydų and Gaono gatvė was home to a glass market. At the time, it was possible to find several Jewish merchants and a wide market of goods. During the Nazi occupation of Lithuania, the Jewish Quarter turned into the Small Jewish Ghetto with about 11,000 Jews incarcerated there.³

Stiklių gatvė: Here you can look up, and along at the street's windows. Self could therefore be seen standing still, looking, with the result that the object-forming subject does not see itself standing there at all. This is because at the moment of looking up at the windows, 'I' perceive 'myself' to be in this part of the Small Ghetto *pour-le-ghetto* [*for-the-ghetto*]; and this phantom-outline of subject's being touches its consciousness. Subject at this moment is primarily existing *pour-le-ghetto*. A consciousness, standing there, looking, can seem to itself as *surpassed* and *organised* into a world by the Ghetto. With its look through its windows, the situation escapes subject. 'I' can now say that 'I' am 'no longer master of the situation' (Sartre 2003: 289). It is an unpredictable situation that can be attended by angst, even by nausea. In another sense, it is also an absurd situation in that 'I' did not reckon with this different reality. And yet a constant reality of a past Jewish existence remains anchored in the history of Lithuania.⁴

Walk further down this street and you arrive at the confluence of Stiklių, Žydų and Gaono gatvė: the heart of the Smaller Ghetto. At the end of Žydų [Jewish] gatvė you can find the site of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius, which could host several thousand people, and which symbolised the spiritual and cultural life of Jewish Lithuanians. It existed from the end of the 16th century until the Holocaust. Although severely damaged, this architectural monument survived the Second World War, only to be destroyed under the Soviet rule. During recent excavations, archaeologists found the *Birmah*, the main chapel, as well as floor slabs which girdled the platform.⁵

From this spot you can take a short cut through an arch under an apartment block (11) and back to Vokiečių. Just over ten minutes later you will find yourself back outside the *Jewish Information Centre*.

Now infused with the Ghetto, subject can, at this point, surpass its possibilities by considering them as possibilities complexly surpassing itself. Thus, by one and the same stroke 'I' has regained its *être-pour-soi* [*being-for-itself*] through consciousness of itself as a perpetual centre of infinite possibilities, just as 'I' has paradoxically transformed its possibilities into

³ The *Small Ghetto* was liquidated on 21 October 1941. The vast majority of Jews living in it were murdered.

⁴ Although estimates vary, it can be noted that of the 265,000 Jews living in Lithuania in June 1941, 254,000 or 95 per cent were murdered during the German occupation. On 1 June 1941 in Vilnius, the Jewish population is put at 60,000.

⁵ Here also is the monument to Vilna Gaon (1720–1797), at Žydų 5, who was one of the most prominent Jewish men and a world-renown Torah and Talmud researcher. Gaon's house was destroyed during the Second World War, although there is a memorial plaque mounted on a nearby house, and the monument by Zimieras Valaitas stands nearby.

dead possibilities by affecting them all with the character of a 'not-constructed-by-me'; that is, as simply given. Paradoxically, this viewing activity has now turned away from an alienating process as a progression of self-recovery, as a galvanisation of Self continues to take place. It is now, precisely at this point that Self *is once again reminded* that it has been *watched intermittently by the Ghetto*. Such a realisation that object has become subject, and that subject has become object can be understood in another, relocated context. That is, in Hegel's dictum: 'The outward is the inward, and the inward is the outward' – Hegel (2010: 196). In redeploing Hegel's work, *The Science of Logic*, the relation of the whole, the Ghetto, and the part, Self, is the *immediate relation or existent immediacy* (Hegel 2010: 452). In one sense, then, the being-looked-at process is based upon a substratum of the Ghetto formed subjectively.

An important aspect of *looking at* the Ghetto, finally, is to note that what is seen is *possessed*. Vilnius and its Ghetto hangs or sits there as not comprehensively unknown in the sense that it keeps something back from the viewer. Rather, as the viewer's mind continually creates and yet stands alone in relation to seeing this part of the city, consciousness attracts the urban space to itself and 'incorporates it in itself'. In Sartre's words, there is a 'movement of dissolution which passes from the city to the knowing subject' (Sartre 2003: 599). The basis of this 'devouring' of the city is *desire*, the desire to assimilate Vilnius and its Ghetto-as-past into 'my' world.

CONCLUSIONS

Today we go to school. The day passed quite differently. [...] We waste less time, the day is divided and flies by very quickly... Yes, that is how it should be in the ghetto, the day should fly by and we should not waste time – Yitskhok Rudashevski, *Diary* (Zapruder 2004: 86).

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The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them – Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley* (Milosz 2000: 37).

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Departing the Ghetto, and at some distance from this historical area in Vilnius, a reversal, a reflective conscious reversion by subject in a manner that can be stated thus: 'I am no longer an object for the Ghetto. I do not deny that it remains connected with me, still somewhat *inside me* as 'I' recently gazed at it, but it now appears as 'pure interiority without efficacy' (Sartre 2003: 289). It is just one property among others of that inside, something comparable for Sartre 'to a sensitized plate in the closed compartment of a camera' (Sartre 2003: 331). Now it no longer touches me; it is simply an image of 'me' in it. The knowledge by which the Ghetto touched 'me' through its gaze has now been transformed into a reflective, recent image of 'me' walking or standing still in the Ghetto. This noted, there is the further possibility of another sudden reversal in conscious activity in that in an upsurge the Ghetto rises once again before 'me' with its particular meanings. This is because subject makes the Ghetto, and its windows exist once more in the midst of the world. It is 'I' who *freely* organises this urban space in the midst of *my world*.

The difference of principle between the Ghetto as object and the Ghetto as subject stems solely from this realisation: the Ghetto, as Jewish subject, cannot be comprehensively known. There is not a problem with knowledge of the Vilnius Ghetto-as-urban-object, but the ghetto-as-urban-object does not refer to its subjectivity; it refers only to its object state. The Jewish Ghetto's portraiture remains incomplete in terms of its conception, as an urban space that relief-like is an incomplete (re)presentation of a ghetto. In this sense, the Ghetto and its past

Jewish inhabitants are not intensely lit as figures in a relief on the point of 'stepping out' (Nietzsche 1994: 118). There is an incompleteness. What then is missing? Amongst other historically bound phenomena in the Ghetto's portraiture, it is the thoughts of the murderers that are absent. It is as if the Ghetto's congested and blurry historical portrait is continually exhorting us to imagine its enclosed, definite horizon of thoughts, a definite intensity of shapes, the predominance of some, and the withdrawal of others, symmetry here, and asymmetry there, unity here, division and betrayal there. We can only imagine not least because philosophy has not sharpened its tooth on the Ghetto's historical brow, on its intricate winding, side streets. One can imagine the Ghetto's portraiture as an intense series of shapes and spaces, and indeed colours, its former sounds, and smells, but it becomes difficult to draw specific conclusions beyond what is already catalogued. This inconclusiveness is compounded as the Ghetto requires that the viewer not look too hard or too close at it. The Ghetto forces us back to a certain distance to view it from there; it is obliged to presuppose that a viewer is at a fixed distance from its vistas, divorced from the past evil *Aktions* which took place here. Indeed, in situating the Ghetto, to what extent is it bound as a series of historical spaces assuming positions for tourists? As a bound space, it holds shapes for the sake of its historicity. Quite simply Vilnius's Ghetto is a tragic historical presence. Visitors today can only grasp at the surface of the death and destruction of people; of a continuous suffering, where, for instance, food, water, medical supplies, and other necessities were withheld by the Nazis (Longacre et al. 2015). This existence in the Ghetto was an inhuman incarceration, the violation of a *Litvak* [Lithuanian Jew] and, indeed, Polish Jew's freedom, the violation of their 'free praxis' (Sartre 1976: 314) where freedom is the basis 'of all values' (Sartre 1996: 24); a denial moreover, of an *authentic existence*. In the Vilnius Ghetto's portraiture, finally, it is not only the thoughts of the murderers that are absent, but the consciousnesses of those who suffered and were slaughtered by both Nazi and collaborationist or sub-man, to use de Beauvoir's phrase, who did 'the actual dirty work of the fanatic and the serious man' (de Beauvoir 1944: 14–15). In this context, it is, of course, a similar scenario when it comes to visiting Kaunas, Riga and parts of Estonia, Poland, Ukraine and Romania. Indeed, referencing these cities and countries is vital in light of the necessary historical documentation of atrocities committed against Jews, just as the first-person testimony has been vital from those Jewish survivors of holocaust; that is, the instantiation of stable first-person testimonies that are not, unfortunately, rare.

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LEONARD STONE

J. P. Sartre'o žiūra ir sąmonė Vilniaus žydų gete

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas buvusio Vilniaus žydų geto sąmonės ir istorinės urbanistinės erdvės santykis. Šis santykis pirmiausia tiriamas egzistencinės filosofijos mokykloje, vadovaujantis J. P. Sartre'o žiūra arba jo filosofine kūryba, nukreipta į *būtį* ir *nebūtį*. Šioje egzistencialioje scheme žiūra metodologiškai skirstoma į 1) buvimą žvelgiant, ir 2) žiūrą žvelgiant. Straipsnyje nagrinėjami sąmonės niuansai fenomenologijoje, kai kalbama apie pakilimus ir nuopusius, žvelgiant į getą, t. y. vaikstant jo gatvėmis ir žiūrint pro geto langus. Subjektas pirmiausia suprantamas kaip padalytas į *patybę*, *aš* ir *man* – tai perteikia nestabilią pirmojo asmens perspektyvą.

Raktažodžiai: J. P. Sartre'as, egzistencializmas, sąmonė, žydų holokaustas, Vilniaus getas