

The Soviet Look (*Le regarde*) in Lithuania

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This paper consolidates an existentialist understanding of the Soviet Look. A significant aspect of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy, gaze theory or the look (*Le regarde*), is redeployed within the context of Soviet Lithuania, a pertinent choice as Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir visited Lithuania in 1965. The primary aim thereof is to reconstruct the *Soviet look* from a Sartrean perspective. A primary problematic is integral to the Soviet look; a look whose *raison d'être* is to fix the Soviet Lithuanian as an objective world, a being-in-itself [*l'être-en-soi*], in the face a contradictory *need*, as the Lithuanian self, to have an authentic lived experience, a Lithuanian being-for-itself [*l'être-pour-soi*]. The process of objectification, of the Lithuanian subject, occurs without an immediate gaze which means that the kernel of the Soviet look is that it turns the subject into an object not so much as *in absentia*, but rather in an atmospheric, attunement manner. While the attributes of the Soviet look are referenced, including its controlling, pan-optic presence, a crucial existentialist contribution is that the Soviet gaze is in bad faith.

Keywords: existentialism, Soviet Union, Lithuania, John Paul Sartre, gaze theory

*'I feel like standing at the gate of paradise', and 'Clouds are under my feet for the first time'.
Anonymous rendition of Sartre's words on his 1965 visit to Nida, Lithuania.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper offers an existentialist critique of Soviet-occupied Lithuania, specifically through the application of Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of *the look* (*Le regard*). Although Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir visited the Baltic state in 1965, Sartre refrained from critically addressing the implications of Soviet occupation. This study seeks to rectify that omission by re-deploying Sartrean gaze theory to reconstruct the *Soviet look* as a mechanism of ontological subjugation; that is, a reconstruction of the forms of this look as a series of interlocking and fundamentally controlling attributes.

Utilising a methodological framework of existential phenomenology, the research bridges an abstract philosophical inquiry with the historical particularities of the Soviet era. It proceeds from the central premise that the pervasive Soviet gaze forcibly transitioned the Lithuanian citizen from a self-determining subject, *être-pour-soi* (being-for-itself), where subject as human consciousness is defined by freedom and its lack of fixed essence, into a state-defined object, *être-pour-autrui* [being-for-others], an object in *their* (Soviet) schematic. Thus, reconstructing the Soviet look from a Sartrean perspective requires the consolidation of an existentialist understanding of the Lithuanian self *presence-ing* the Soviet look; that is, consolidating an understanding

of the Lithuanian self as object in the 'eyes' of *sovietinis kitas* [Soviet Other]. An existentialist critique, no less, of a particular *lived experience* as immediate knowledge. Thus, the 'look' is examined via a phenomenological mode: being looked at as the objectification of the Lithuanian self under the imposition of the Lithuanian Soviet state. By delineating this mode, this paper elucidates the ontological conflict between the *Sui generis* Lithuanian identity and the Soviet Other, ultimately providing a systematic critique of what Foucault called the panoptic state apparatus (Foucault 1979: 195–228). In addition, lastly, several enriching insights that are located outside of existentialist understandings are referenced, particularly with regard to the hermeneutic premise of an imposed, bounded existence for the Lithuanian subject. In this sense, a primary attribute of the Soviet look is its gaze as the *menace* of bureaucratised control.

In Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre illustrates how consciousness and sense of self are transformed from being a free subject into an object by the presence of another person. Within this approach, and as a literature review, the theory of *the look*, as forms of acknowledgement, has, for instance, been understood based on the premise of the impossibility of mutual recognition between consciousnesses, unlike Hegel's objectification that involves mutual recognition (Hegel 1997). Sartre's gaze theory has been widely employed and published in various contexts, furthermore, that include the profound psychological implications of objectification for Lacan (Miller 1991), Barua's and Sharma's comparison of Sartre's and Lacan's Gaze theory (Barua, Sharma 2017: 61–75), which is also the focus of Groys in his article (Groys 2015). In brief, while Sartre's gaze is rooted in interpersonal consciousness, Lacan and Foucault shifted the concept toward psychoanalysis and institutional power. Other works include Anderson's focus on Sartre's self-other relations in contemporary affect theory (Anderson 2021: 709–726). There are impressive, significant treatments of Sartre's gaze theory, by editors and philosophers such as Eshelman and Mui (2020), and Morris (Morris 2010), and Sartrean writers that explore postmodernism and Sartre, including Sartre's gaze theory, such as Fox (Fox 2003). In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), furthermore, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari establish a critical distinction between 'the Face' and the 'Look' (Deleuze, Guattari 1987).

GAZES, THE SOVIET APPARATUS, AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN *ALL SAID AND DONE*, 'IT FLEW LIKE A SHOOTING STAR', AND SARTRE AND THE USSR: THE PLAYER AND THE SURVIVORS

'I have spent more than a week in Lithuania, spoken with many Lithuanians, and I have not seen a single slave. The crowds I have observed in Vilnius, Kaunas and Palanga are joyful and happy – they do not resemble slaves.' Sartre. Press Conference, Vilnius. July 1965.

Selecting the 1965 visit of Sartre and de Beauvoir to this Soviet-occupied nation denotes a historical event that encapsulates a multiple repertoire of objectifying gazes, including that of the Western intellectual, the gaze of Soviet authorities controlling the scene, and the gaze of Lithuanians seeking validation. In other words, the gaze of the occupied (longing for validation). That is, for Lithuanians, receiving Sartre was a unique experience of being seen by the West, substantiating their culture despite their detachment from the West; a gaze where the subject (Lithuania) is validated by the Western Other. Lithuanian scenes were strictly curated by Soviet authorities, who controlled what Sartre saw, creating a gaze of a socialist object rather than a subject. Lastly, there is the gaze of the traveller (Beauvoir's perspective). As a travelling partner, Simone de Beauvoir's frustration with the sanitised, controlled, 'mediocre' experience in Vilnius in her work *Tout Compte fait* [*All Said and Done*] (1972) provides a direct contrast to Sartre's apathy, representing a gaze that identifies the objectification in real-time.

Sartre was accompanied around Lithuania by Eduardas Mieželaitis (at that time the chairman of the Lithuanian Writers' Union) and Mykolas Sluckis. Photographer A. Sutkus also went with them. Scholars, such as Solveiga Daugirdaitė, who studied the visit, notes that while the couple were polite publicly, their private reflections and written accounts suggest they felt the 'mediated' reality of the tour was a 'shooting star' event – a briefly intense, yet staged, experience. Not quite. Sartre has no written account of his trip. Regarding de Beauvoir, Daugirdaitė, furthermore notes:

Lithuanian readers in the '60s could not really assess ideas adequately because they were unaware of de Beauvoir's input in revealing the status of women in a patriarchal society. Without the background of Le Deuxième Sexe [The Second Sex, 1949] observations of this kind by de Beauvoir did not differ at all from the general declarations about women's achievements and equality that were published in the press on various occasions (Daugirdaitė 2019: 1).

In Cécile Vaissié's work, *Sartre et l'URSS: Le Joueur et les survivants [Sartre and the USSR: The Player and the Survivors]* (2023), Vaissié analysed all 11 of Sartre's trips to the Soviet Union between 1954 and 1966, and argued how Soviet authorities used Sartre as a propaganda tool, who in turn ignored Soviet repression. Vaissié also noted Sartre's personal relationship with his Soviet translator and mistress, Lena Zonina, who worked for the Soviet Writers' Union and was linked to the KGB, as does Kabašinskaitė (Kabašinskaitė 2025). Vaissié also compares Sartre's passionate anti-colonialism regarding Algeria and his blindness to Soviet imperialism and the plight of the Baltic states (Vaissié 2023).

All three texts confirm that Sartre had no interest in formulating a Soviet gaze as an extension of his gaze theory, sometimes known as the keyhole theory (Sartre 1956: 254–265). Moreover, within these writings, the presence of the Soviet apparatus forms a backdrop, a sub-structure. Indeed, the Soviet apparatus including the KGB, party officials and apparatchiks, is a significant precursor to understanding the Soviet gaze. Not in the Althusserian sense, that is, where state apparatuses are structured into repressive and ideological (Althusser 1971: 127–186), but a Soviet state apparatus in a Sartrean sense as a 'fused group' (Sartre 2004: 345), a binary with *We-subject*, a Lithuanian Other, carriers of a particular existence, of a nationalism, in its different gradations of intensity and authenticity. A Baltic nationalism in favour of decentralised intelligence and difference; 'where nationality', for Sesemann, 'gives humanity a certain special and unique expression' (Sesemann 2010: 49). Interestingly, and to identify sympathetically, that is, to actively support the Soviet regime during the occupation would require double consciousness. One as a Lithuanian and the other as a Soviet citizen. Triple consciousness if you were a Lithuanian Pole (Miknys, Staliūnas 2011: 34–48). Thus, hybrid personalities, with gradations of self-awareness. This much stated, there is also, however, a guiding thread that unites these consciousnesses regardless of double consciousness, as in the well-known example of the waiting line for a city bus, 'everyone is the same as the Others in so far as he is Other than himself' (Sartre 1956: 260). Sartre continues: 'I am not in the center of my world, which is elsewhere, in other people (all of whom feel the same way as I do)' (Sartre 2004: xxviii). However, it was *different* for the Communist Party cadre or member. In this fused group, on the contrary, each member 'is the center', the centre is 'everywhere; otherness has been converted into identity' (Sartre 2004: xxviii). Within this elite group schematic then, 'everyone is the same as the other, and otherness has momentarily become a kind of collective identity' (Sartre 2004: xxviii). For these officials, the Soviet state was not a faceless bureaucracy, as in mainstream existentialist thought, or as Heidegger imagined, a bureaucracy peopled by *das Man* ['the they'] (Heidegger 1962: 25–27).

THE SOVIET LOOK IN LITHUANIA

'I hoped they will be able to preserve the equality with men provided by the state system, and, of course, I wish them happiness in their lives and work.' A farewell message to Lithuanian women from Simone de Beauvoir for the daily Lithuanian newspaper, *Tiesa* [Fact].

For the purposes of this paper, and in *Being and Nothingness* (Part 3, Chapter 1), Sartre explains that experiencing *le regard* does not require being directly stared at by another person's eyes. He states that the look can be felt through the *awareness* of being a *being-for-others*, which can be triggered simply by the presence of another person or even the *possibility* of being observed. Sartre explicitly states that the look is not restricted to the literal convergence of two ocular globes in our direction. 'It is never eyes that look at us' (Sartre 1956: 277). Indeed, the sound/presence of another can mean that the look is felt through indirect, peripheral, or auditory cues, such as 'the sound of a footstep followed by silence, or the slight opening of a shutter, or a light movement of a curtain' (Sartre 1956: 257). In short, the experience of feeling *Le regarde* amounts to a certain *ambiance*. Thus, and as a first attribute, the Soviet look is a *surveillance ambiance*, a particular spatial atmosphere with potential pockets of respite from the Soviet way of 'doing things', particularly at home. As a second characteristic, there is one, overriding factor that triggers the Soviet look, and this is *possibility*. In Sartre's famous voyeur example, the person looking through a keyhole feels the look of the Other when they hear footsteps, even though they are not being watched, and even when it turns out to be a 'false alarm' (no one appears) (Sartre 1956: 347–353). Crucially, the shame, to use Sartre's term, felt by the Lithuanian self arises from the continued *possibility* of being observed, not the act itself. A continuum for Sartre (Sartre 1956: 277), and noted by Stone (Stone 2023: 34–43), is the interlocking of Othernesses in an *être en-couple-avec-l'autre* [being-in-a-pair-with-the-other]; paired in an existence 'every single day of everydayness' (Zukauskaitė 2015: 102). Objectification without a gaze means that the kernel, or the key aspect of the Soviet look is that it turns the subject into an object in a non-phenomenological presence. Not in *absentia*, but within a process of *attunement* in the midst of an *atmosphere*, as Heidegger notes (Heidegger 1962: 172–179). Yet this is not necessarily so.

The existence of experiencing the Soviet look is experience *perceived through the senses*. And crucially the Soviet look is not the Soviet state *en masse* looking, but rather a structure of networks, as veins running throughout Soviet society, *looking-out*. A web of significance whereof civil society praxes must be *approved*.

The Lithuanian subject, in short, is always aware that they can be, and are *judged* by Soviet Other. It is a self-awareness 'that we are constantly judged and defined by others, our freedom is limited and we are trapped in a reality shaped by others' interpretations of us' (Sartre 1956: 254). However, there is a major factor absent here. In the context of Soviet Other, the Lithuanian subject is being judged, or the possibility thereof, *politically*. This is unlike Western democracies where being judged, or the possibility of being judged is just as ever present, but without political judgements that could lead to the persecution of a subject. This then is a crucial, key difference between *lived experience* in the communist Soviet Union and its east and central European satellites, and Western democracies.

Coding the Soviet Union as a colonizer of Lithuania (from 1940–41/1944–1991) in post-Soviet Baltic studies, furthermore, leads to another aspect of the Soviet look. This can be located by reconfiguring Frantz Fanon's concept of the colonial gaze which describes how colonial power structures define, objectify and fix the identity of the colonised, forcing them to view themselves through a lens of inferiority. And here we come to a further, distinguishing attribute of the Soviet gaze. While Fanon's African subject is colonised by the white, racist

colonizer (Fanon 2008), the Lithuanian colonised subject is obligated to see themselves not as racially inferior, but as *politically inferior*. This characteristic of the Soviet gaze can encapsulate a political inferiority to a pre-set of 'unquestionable' Soviet state political processes. Inferior furthermore to a centralised blueprint, and wrought elsewhere (Russia), for the Sovietisation of Lithuania. Colonizers, moreover, possessing to use Donskis' words a 'naive assumption that they are the very centre of the universe and that there is no being beyond us' (Donskis 2010: vii). Such a group has a collective personality for Husserl, who continues with this reification, of a 'personality of higher order' (Husserl 1973: 194, 469). A political grouping, in other words, where the interest of a higher order remains *in situ* by virtue of its *denial*. Denial in many dimensions, it must be said, including not least denial of 'the unique validity of the human individual' (Donskis 2010: vii). And a denial and violation of, most critically according to Sartre, of 'their free praxis' (Sartre 2004: 314), where freedom is the basis 'of all values' (Sartre 1996: 24). A classic, fundamental axiom in the existentialist thought.

Another potential element of the Soviet gaze is that it can be seen as *machismo*. It is metaphorically swaggering, lively, and backed up by power. According to Figes in *A People's Tragedy* (1996), the machismo of the Soviet communist *aura* can be traced back to the Bolsheviks and was evident in a 'macho culture' characterised by militant rhetoric, action and violence. Figes notes this was reflected in leadership styles, the adoption of 'black leather jackets', and a confrontational approach contrasting with the Provisional Government (Figes 1996: 386). It is a male gaze, however, predominantly in line with Western democracies where, according to Mulvey, 'women are seen through a heterosexual, masculine prism, an active gaze', 'reducing them to objects of voyeuristic pleasure' (Mulvey 1975: 6–8). In Soviet Lithuania, the making of Soviet woman meant a state objectification as a mother *and* as a worker in a Soviet system. Indeed, the male gaze as an aspect of the Soviet look, according to Vaiseta, revealed not only a patriarchal order, but 'also a wider range of men's reactions to life in Soviet society....' (Vaiseta 2024: 135–161).

Alongside the *menace* of bureaucratised control, including patriarchal, gender control, then, a further aspect of the all-pervading Soviet look is that it ruptured Lithuanian identity, a process entailing a ruthless break with preceding identity conditions. Under Soviet occupation, the Lithuanian identity was under *continual pressure*. In the existentialist rhetoric, a pressure understood as a lived *angst*, that is, when *experiencing* the other as Soviet state in an interpersonal consciousness. The Soviet gaze established angst-ridden modes of being for the Lithuanian citizen, beings 'as otherwise than [Lithuanian] being', for Levinas (Levinas 1985: viii). Lithuanian folk traditions escaped, but then folk culture remained a static culture. A Soviet gaze furthermore that rendered a lived experience other than an authentic Lithuanian lived experience; a continual gaze tearing at the Lithuanian identity. In this way, the Lithuanian subject was being forcibly transitioned from a self-determining subject, where subject has freedom, into a state-defined object, a being-for-other, an object in *their* (Soviet) schematic. And such a transition entailed the great *tragedy* of deportations for those deemed 'not suitable' for transitioning.

The Soviet look, as prevalent in night as in day, led to the deportation of thousands of Lithuanians into exile. Those Lithuanians who were deemed 'enemies of the Soviet state' and unsuitable for transitioning into Soviet citizens (Sovietisation) were rounded up for transportation not only to Siberia, but also to Gulags in the Arctic Circle zone or to cotton fields in Tajikistan. Indeed, during 1940–1953, some 132,000 Lithuanians were deported. More than 70% of the deportees were women and children. Some 30,00 of the deportees died. Additionally, during

this period, another 200,000 people were imprisoned. 150,000 were subsequently sent to Gulags in the USSR (Kuodytė, Tracevskis 2004: 3). Indeed, the first mass roundups for deportation, of between 17,000–18,500 Lithuanians, occurred in June 1941 (14–19 June) and were carried out by NKVD/NKGB troops from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The two largest deportations were carried out first in May 1948 with the Operation Spring, where estimated 40,000–50,000 were deported from Lithuania and were specifically designed to undermine the Forest Brothers (anti-Soviet partisans) and their support base, and in March 1949 (25–28 March), the Operation *Priboi* [coastal surf], wherein 32,000–34,000 were deported from Lithuania. The deportations were ordered by the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union and implemented by Soviet security structures (NKVD/NKGB/MGB). The Operation *Priboi* was carried out simultaneously in the Lithuanian SSR, Latvian SSR and Estonian SSR. The Operation Spring affected only Lithuania. An additional large-scale deportation took place in October 1951, the code name *Osen* [autumn], where 20,000 Lithuanians were deported, transported in cattle cars to Krasnoyarsk Krai and Tomsk Oblast in Siberia in an operation aimed at farmers who did not join *kolkhozes* (collective farms) (Anušauskas 2002: 22). As Anušauskas notes, the round up of Lithuanian ‘enemies of the state’ followed a particular modus operandi:

Extra soldiers, equipment, and vehicles would be brought in to carry out the deportation. However, the deportations were kept strictly secret... Armed groups of soldiers would surround a targeted house in the middle of the night. At night it was more likely to find everyone at home and easier to keep the operation quiet without alarming other residents. Everyone inside, including newborns and the elderly, would be ordered to pack food and other necessities (the exact list of what should or could be taken varied between deportations and depended on the generosity of the soldiers). If someone attempted to resist or run away, they would be shot or beaten. Often families would be separated and there were cases when parents, children, or spouses voluntarily reported to the train station to be deported with their captured relatives (Anušauskas 2002: 25).

Many exiled Lithuanians did not return home; some did after Khrushchev’s reforms. However, and as Davoliūtė notes, ‘de-Stalinization... did not spell an end to the goal of Sovietization through individual and social transformation’ (Davoliūtė 2013: 10). This point notwithstanding, it is the potent factor of the *consequences* of repression, including paranoia and the psychological breakdown of its Lithuanian victims, the subject of the Lithuanian writer Ričardas Gavelis’s novel, *Vilniaus pokeris* [Vilnius Poker] (Gavelis 1989), and indeed the experience of 50 years of ‘intellectual repression’ (Tumenaite 2000: 184). Such brutality places the Soviet look in a location that is at the opposite end of a spectrum wherein a benevolent Soviet look could have focused on minimising unnecessary suffering and cruelty rather than seeking local imperial political ambitions. In this sense, the Soviet gaze was not meaningless or *absurd* in the existentialist wayward sense of Camus (Camus 2015). Neither, from an existentialist viewpoint, is the Soviet look understood as a grand narrative, as in postmodernist thought (Lyotard 1984). That is, a grand, sweeping, totalising, and inherently exclusionary dystopia that claimed to represent universal truth. The existentialist focus is rather on situated and fragmented existence, including grotesque, *bounded choices*, as Lithuanians were ‘thrown’ into the Soviet world. Instead of a linear narrative, Soviet existence and thereof Soviet lived experience can be understood through ‘limit situations’ (death, suffering, guilt and conflict) that break through normal life and force authentic, non-narrative awareness (Jaspers 1970). ‘Normal life’, however, or everydayness with its *ennui*, was not continually confrontational by any means. Sartre’s ‘hell is other people’, in his play *No Exit* (1944) (Sartre 1989), can be transcribed to read ‘hell’ as Soviet Other. However, and more specifically hell was, *at times*, Soviet

indoctrination (Ranalli 2022: 61–80) through, as major examples, education and mass media. Moreover, to avoid this indoctrination involved a form of mental gymnastics, as discussed by Czesław Miłosz in his *The Captive Mind* (1953) (Miłosz 1990).

A primary and central problematic needs to be referenced at this juncture, and this is the dynamic contradiction integral to the Soviet look; a look whose *raison d'être* is to fix the Soviet Lithuanian as an objective world, a being-in-itself [*l'être-en-soi*], in the face a contradictory *need*, as the Lithuanian self, to have an authentic lived experience, a Lithuanian being-for-itself [*l'être-pour-soi*] where human existence is viewed as a *project* – a constant process of self-creation where we *surge up* in the world and define ourselves afterward. Complexly for Sartre, being-in-itself and being-for-itself has the same *being* as being-in-itself. Less complexly, a Lithuanian being-for-itself, where meaning is constructed by actions that could only occur outside of the Soviet gaze. In other words, the Soviet look closed off access to such a presence as free praxis within a human realm and within this process also took away individual responsibility; Lithuanians could not *assume* responsibility for their lived experience (Jopling 1992: 127). Such a lack of responsibility, as part of lived experience, can mean losing oneself in the Soviet crowd. Indeed, for Kierkegaard, the losing of oneself is an unaware time: 'losing one's self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all. No other loss can occur so quietly; any other loss – an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. – is sure to be noticed' (Kierkegaard 1989: 62). Not for all however, and not for some of those traumatic social groups that are 'doing the work of mourning' for the old Soviet system, perceiving themselves, for Zukauskaitė, 'as an object, and not as a subject of past events' (Zukauskaitė 2015: 99–106). Furthermore, past events, like the brutality of the Soviet gaze in the form of Soviet troops who fired on and killed 14 Lithuanians and wounded 700 hundred in January 1991, gives the Soviet look a further *violent*, irrepressible constituent element (Keller 1991). In this sense, violence and the *threat* of violence functioned as a pillar of control; a might-is-right, predatory and Soviet imposition. An imposition in the form of a coercive state policy aimed at creating a uniform 'Soviet people' (*sovetskii narod*) loyal to the Soviet Union. A policy therefore of imposing subjective conformity with the objective 'needs' of the Soviet system. A violent, machismo imposition whose gaze is felt in a range of situations and circumstances, of simulations. However, the *catastrophe* of an oppressive, foreign gaze for Jewish Lithuanians (*Litvaks*) and for resident Jewish Poles began earlier, with the Nazi occupation of 1941 and, as Donskis reminds us, with the subsequent murder of around 220,000 Jews in Lithuania (Donskis 2013: 45).

CONCLUSIONS

'To the Earth an angry evening came,
So terribly alien and restless,
And there outside the window a wandering wind is blowing
And like a passenger knocking on the door.' Vytautas Mačernis, *Žanga, Vizijos* [Visions] (Mačernis 1990: 47).

Hitherto, the conceptualisation of the Soviet look has identified several aspects of its immense presence. The conditions it brings into existence as ends to a means are a *surveillance ambience* with a menace of control; that is, a particular repressive spatial atmosphere, and the continued *possibility* of Lithuanian Other being observed. Moreover, the process of objectification, of the Lithuanian subject, occurs without an immediate gaze which means that the kernel of the Soviet look is that it turns the subject into an object not so much as *in absentia*, but rather in an atmospheric, attunement or 'getting used to' state-of-mind. The Lithuanian subject, denied

free praxis, is furthermore aware that they can be, and are *judged* by Soviet Other, *politically*. Lithuanian colonised subject is obligated to see themselves not as racially inferior, but as *politically inferior*. Indeed, as political fatalities. In addition, there is a continual denial within the Soviet look of the *validity* of the notion of an individual. Other constituent parts of the Soviet gaze include its panoptic, controlling *machismo*, and its predatory nature. These conditions suppress Lithuanian being-for-itself, suppressing a certain grasp on the world in which being shapes itself through it, and instead transitions the Lithuanian subject into the Soviet object – Sovietisation, wherein the Soviet essence precedes existence and where the subject has no freedom to change. As such, these phenomenological aspects represent the restricted reality of Soviet life. That is, the subjective, everyday encounter with Soviet communist phenomena, and scarcity. Such representations also include waiting in line, shoddy consumer products, including poor shaving razors for men (as predicted in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*) (Orwell 2021: 4, 5), the reliance on personal connections or networks rather than money to obtain goods or services; that is, of 'knowing people' to navigate the system, *virtuvės kalbėti* [kitchen talk], where Lithuanian citizens express often critical views in safe spaces like home kitchens, and ritualistic participations, for instance, participation in May Day parades. Other such phenomena include shared communal life, where, at times, there is forced living together with multiple families in a single apartment (*bendrabitis*), and where there is a pervasive distrust of neighbours. In short, the phenomenology of the Soviet system can be understood within an existentialist context as the study of how this form of communism was experienced, and this, in one acute angle, can be understood as a *mixed feeling* of communal warmth in private against a background of scarcity and secrecy, and fear or caution in public.

The phenomenon of the Soviet look encapsulates key aspects of immediate knowledge regarding Soviet existence. A lived experience as a state-of-mind; that is, of an experience of *how* Soviet things impacted being, acting as an existential, ontological and affective, rather than psychological, state. This noted, a further, crucial element of the Soviet look is that it is in *mauvaise foi*, or *bad faith*; bad faith in the Sartrean sense that it is overridingly negative (Catalano 1980: 88), as in Sartre's 'waiter', the classic example of bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*, where there is *acceptance* of rigid social roles. Bad faith involves treating oneself as an object with a fixed nature (facticity), with an enslaved mind, rather than as a free, conscious agent (transcendence). Yet the Lithuanian self under Soviet occupation had a little choice but to be a form of being-in-itself, rigid or not; to act out a Soviet script, and without freedom of praxis in the presence of the Soviet look: the look of *local imperialism* as an existentialist threat. This is not a self-deception, or, if it is, then crucially Lithuanian citizens had *not chosen* this deception, this inauthenticity.

Applying Sartre's *Le regarde* by redeploing its key features is lastly a potent tool that helps frame the Soviet presence in Lithuania not just as a political occupation, but also as a persistent, occupying *look*. A look that ultimately denied not only the Lithuanian self as a being-for-itself, filling being instead with opaqueness and passivity, a freezing of freedom that is, into an object, but also a look that denied the legitimacy of the Lithuanian state. In an existentialist understanding, the struggle to regain subjectivity and see oneself as a free human, and not Soviet Other's object, is the philosophical backdrop to the independence movements in all three occupied Baltic states.

Sartre ultimately became critical of the Soviet Union, particularly after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

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LEONARD STONE

Sovietinis žvilgsnis (*Le regarde*) Lietuvoje

Santrauka

Šis straipsnis susijęs su egzistencialistine filosofija ir jos pritaikymu sovietinio žvilgsnio analizei. Vienas reikšmingiausių Jeano Paulo Sartre'o egzistencialistinės filosofijos aspektų – žvilgsnio teorija arba žvilgsnis (*Le regarde*) – nagrinėjamas sovietų Lietuvos kontekste, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant J. P. Sartre'o ir Simone de Beauvoir apsilankymui Lietuvoje 1965 m. Pagrindinis straipsnio tikslas – atkurti sovietinį žvilgsnį iš J. P. Sartre'o perspektyvos. Pagrindinė problema yra neatsiejama nuo sovietinio žvilgsnio; žvilgsnis, kurio *raison d'être* yra nustatyti sovietinę lietuvių kaip objektyvų pasaulį, būti savyje [*l'être-en-soi*], susidūrus su prieštaringu poreikiu, kaip lietuviškajam „aš“ turėti autentišką išgyventą patirtį, lietuvišką būti sau [*l'être-pour-soi*]. Tačiau lietuviškojo subjekto objektyvavimo procesas vyksta be tiesioginio žvilgsnio, todėl sovietinio žvilgsnio esmė yra subjekto pavertimas objektu ne tiek už akių, kiek per atmosferinį, suderintą proto būsenos veikimą. Nors straipsnyje aptariami sovietinio žvilgsnio požymiai, įskaitant jo kontrolinį, panoptinį buvimą, esminis egzistencialistinis indėlis yra tas, kad sovietinis žvilgsnis yra nesąžiningas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: egzistencializmas, Sovietų Sąjunga, Lietuva, Jean Paul Sartre, žvilgsnio teorija