

Fake Emotions: Impediments to Bigger Thomas's Ontological Transcendence in Richard Wright's *Native Son*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Richard Wright's (1940) *Native Son*, as one of the most effective works in modern African American literary history, in the light of Jean Paul Sartre's conception of transcendence. This article draws upon Sartre's existential views on the concept of transcendence in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936/1960) and *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory* (1939/1948). The concept means that, through the power of imagination, one can envisage some projects for oneself so as to leave one's present state behind or to transcend it. In *Being and Nothingness* (1943/1950), Sartre clarified that consciousness was transcendence. This study focuses on two groups of critics opposing on the possibility of transcendence in Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of the novel, asserting that the first group ceased to acknowledge Bigger's transcendence, whereas the second group highlighted his transcendence, yet, ceased to delve into Bigger's psychological plight and the function of emotions, either enabling or paralysing Bigger before his execution. In our view, Bigger does have the capability to transcend as a distinguished human being. However, we argue that Bigger's emotions, inauthentic and fake, hinder his path to transcendence. Therefore, this study restricts itself to the selected pieces from the novel before Mary's accidental murder and her subsequent decapitation by Bigger, to stress the role of the protagonist's emotions and their consequential effects on his transcendence as an existentially distinguished individual. Our findings suggest that it is Bigger's resort to fake emotions that bereaves him of transcendence as an existentially autonomous being.

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INTRODUCTION

Being called the father of African American literature (Fabre, 1985, p. 34), Richard Wright is a towering figure in the literary history of the United States; impressive enough to make Henry Louis Gates (1997) affirm: "if one had to identify the single most influential shaping force in modern Black literary history, one would probably have to point to Wright and the publication of *Native Son*" (p. xi). In his essay entitled "Black Boys and Native Sons", Irving Howe (1963) highlighted that: "The day *Native Son* appeared, American culture was changed forever... Wright's novel brought out into the open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear, and violence that have crippled and may not yet destroy our culture" (p. 41)

Native Son is the story of a 20-year-old black American youth named Bigger Thomas who was living in utter poverty on Chicago's South Side in the 1930s. The novel's treatment of Bigger and his motivations is an example of literary naturalism and existentialism. Bigger inadvertently murders his white employer's daughter named Mary which results in his imprisonment in a state prison cell awaiting imminent execution where his dull future appears to degenerate into a bleaker one than before. Bigger's position in the novel regarding his oeuvre is that of rejection of a racist society which withholds primary rights from him, depriving him of the chance to live as an autonomous human being. This deprivation stimulates Bigger's emotional reactions, making it worthwhile to us to evaluate to what extent Bigger

enjoys any freedom or transcendence and what the psychological ramifications of such transcendence might be in terms of his emotional states; all of which can be elaborated with the help of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential views.

According to Nina Kressner Cobb (1960), Wright had met Sartre in the United States in 1946 for the first time and later saw him when the former visited France the same year. Accordingly, Wright's association with Sartre and other French existentialists is undeniable. Wright had a personal friendship with Sartre. Wright's initial, negative view of Sartre changed after meeting him. Fabre, quoting from Wright, says, "Sartre is quite of my opinion regarding the possibility of human action today, that it is up to the individual to do what he can to uphold the concept of what it means to be human" (Fabre, 1978, p.42). In his conversation with Sartre, as Fabre quotes from Wright, the black writer reveals: "The great danger, I told him, in the world today is that the very feeling and conception of what is a human being might well be lost. He agreed. I feel very close to Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir..." (p. 42). Wright proceeded to state: "Sartre is the only Frenchman I've met who had voluntarily made this identification of the French experience with that of the rest of mankind. How rare a man is this Sartre!" (p. 42).

While Sartre's philosophy can be traced in Wright's works, it cannot be claimed that Wright had written his works under the shadow of the Frenchman's philosophy. We should bear in our mind that Wright

had written most of his novels before his acquaintance with Sartre. However, we can apply Sartre's existentialism to Wright's famous work *Native Son* because it aptly deals with human psyche and the way it can be distorted.

One of the important existentialist concepts that Sartre focused on is transcendence. In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre (1936/1960) argued that the ego is "a synthesis of interiority and transcendence" (p. 83). By the concept of "transcendence" Sartre meant that through the power of imagination, one envisages some projects for oneself so as to leave one's present state behind or transcend oneself. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre (1943/1950) clarified that consciousness was transcendence and that "consciousness can transcend towards transphenomenal being because it is not being, it is nothingness" (Daigle & Landry, 2013, p. 95). What Sartre meant by "nothingness" is a very human reality from which it is impossible to flee unless one devises some absurd techniques to convince oneself that there is no such thing as transcendence. It might be asked how Sartre defines "nothingness". To find the answer one might refer to Sartre's (1946/2007) perspective in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*: a human being "materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself. If man as existentialists conceive of him cannot be defined, it is because to begin with he is nothing" (p.22). It can be claimed that nothingness breeds responsibility and such commitment is accompanied by consciousness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Putting Bigger's responsibility aside, critics such as Sam Bluefarb (1972) and Charles E. Wilson (2005) found Bigger's transcendence to be insignificant when it came to his consciousness. However, researchers such as Donald B. Gibson (1970) and Benjamin D. Carson (2008) believe transcendence is an important element in shaping Bigger's very autonomy as an existential being. A glance at the related literature classifying the above-mentioned critics sheds more light on those attitudes.

Research on the probability of Bigger's transcendence suggests that there are two groups of critics. The first group, having a naturalistic standpoint, presume it is impossible for Bigger to transcend his circumstance and rise above it. They bound the protagonist to a pre-determined condition of Jim Crow America with no freedom of choice. Critics and scholars such as Sam Bluefarb (1972), Yoshinobu Hakutani (1988, 1991), Jeffery Atteberrey (2009), and Charles E. Wilson (2005) are among those who belong to this group. The second group, however, having existentialist viewpoints, are those who maintain it is possible for Bigger to achieve transcendence through free will. Katherine Fishburn (1977), W. Laurence Hogue (2009), Donald B. Gibson (1970), Gregory Alan Jones (2000) and Benjamin D. Carson (2008) adhere to the latter.

Having a pessimistic, naturalistic view regarding Bigger's fate, in *The Escape Motif in the American Novel: Mark Twain to Richard Wright*, Bluefarb (1972) asserts that

Bigger's life is like a labyrinth in which he is entrapped either from within or without. Any transcendence is thwarted because "his escape has been blocked; it is doomed to failure even before it begins" (p. 135). Thus, Bigger had neither a realistic expectation of life nor the capability to escape the situation. By the same token, in his essay entitled "Richard Wright and American Naturalism", Hakutani (1988) contends that Wright's use of crime as a thematic device in *Native Son* bears witness to the novel being a naturalist one. He asserts that any violent action committed by Bigger is inevitable because of the external forces. In "Two on Wright," Hakutani (1991) expands his ideas to incorporate existential philosophy, asserting: "Richard Wright criticism since its inception has been saturated with references to literary naturalism and existentialist philosophy" (p. 491). Thus, to Hakutani, *Native Son* is a mingling of the two literary schools. Interestingly, Atteberrey (2009) delineates his moderate naturalistic position in reading the novel by highlighting the fact that Wright's interpretation of existentialism, despite being almost at odds with that of Sartre, is an authentic one. Atteberrey thinks that Wright has paid much attention to the dominance of external forces, a point which has been often disregarded by Sartre. This scholar conceives that the pitfall of existentialism is paying excessive attention to "inside" and ignoring "outside" (p.173). Last of all, Wilson (2005) renders any existential interpretation almost ineffectual and implausible, arguing that since the novel is to explore race and racism, Wright

employs the literary school of naturalism where no transcendence can be envisaged on the side of the protagonist. Wilson insists that Bigger is "trapped in a world where he can exercise few, if any, choices" (p.22).

However, as belonging to the second group, Fishburn (1977) affirms that "Bigger, using sheer will, manages to transcend his world, to accept himself for what he is and to accept the consequences of what he has done" (p. 71). That is, Bigger can be indubitably considered a fully existentially developed character. Nevertheless, Hogue (2009) in "Can Subaltern Speak?, Existential Reading of Richard Wright's *Native Son*" articulates that, throughout the novel, Bigger desperately wants to express himself, but since "language fails him and he is unable to speak, to be heard" (p. 25), his attempts to transcend his inferior situation are all thwarted. The psychological freedom is postponed until Bigger perpetrates murder, that is, ironically, redemption from inferiority is granted upon him when he resorts to violence through which his very individuality starts to bloom. Having an approximately different view, Gibson (1970) argues that due to an overemphasis on social aspect of Bigger Thomas's being, critics have neglected his individuality. He stresses: "The emphasis is upon a problem that he faces as an isolated, solitary human whose problem is compounded by race though absolutely not defined by racial considerations" (p. 10). Gibson implies that Bigger's ontological transcendence should not be disregarded when interpreting Bigger. Focusing on the Sartrean concept of

“bad faith” in his dissertation entitled “Bad Faith and Racism”, Jones (2000) states that Bigger in *Native Son* is the victim of white people’s dehumanising racism. Making Bigger’s transcendence limited, the only relationship which is detectable in the novel is that of “I-It” one (p. 61); where whites are considered as human beings and blacks as objects. Lastly, Carson (2008) argues that: “while Bigger unquestionably makes murderous choices, Bigger’s life, wrought from the alembic of indifferent ‘sociological pressures’ and ‘multiple compulsions’ was never his own to live” (p. 29). So, Carson thinks it is not Bigger who transcends society; it is society which transcends him instead. However, Bigger can partially transcend himself after murdering and decapitating Mary. Carson also asserts that Bigger cannot be called an existential hero because he fails to come to terms with the limitations of existence.

Our analysis of the ideas of both groups show that all the critics of the first group, namely Bluefarb, Hakutani, Atteberrey, and Wilson, commonly claim that Bigger has little or no choice in his life, that he is a victim of a racist society trampled by the white folks and that he is destined to be miserable and have an unfortunate death. As evident above, the arguments of the former group neglect a highly salient human attribute: agency. Although they provide the reader with a proper portrayal of Bigger’s milieu and the way he is affected by his situation and its brutality, they turn a blind eye to another dimension of his very existence: transcendence. We assert

that all critics of the second group namely, Fishburn, Hogue, Gibson, Jones and Carson, share one commonality in the presence of transcendence in Bigger. However, they, for instance, differ in the opinion whether it is the society that transcends Bigger, or Bigger transcends society. This second group of scholars who regard the novel as a work replete with existential themes cease to delve into Bigger’s psychological plight and the function of emotions, either enabling or paralysing him before his execution. While our study restricts itself to the selected pieces from the novel before Mary’s accidental murder and the subsequent decapitation by Bigger, it aims to fill the above-mentioned gaps by focusing on the protagonist’s emotions and their effect on his transcendence, regarding him as an existentially distinguished individual.

As far as Bigger’s emotions bared in his interaction with Gus are concerned, our position in this paper is closer to the second group of the scholars who employed existential tenets in interpreting his transcendence. In our view, Bigger, as a distinguished human being, does have the capability to transcend. However, we argue that Bigger’s emotions, inauthentic and fake, hinder his path to transcendence.

We limit our study to Bigger’s interactions with Gus that reach their zenith in their dramatic fight. The reason for this restriction is twofold: first, Bigger’s transcendence, as we indicated in the review of the related literature, has often been investigated in relation to Mary’s murder and the significance of other sections of the

novel has been mysteriously overlooked. Second, since in his communication with Gus, Bigger better speaks his heart with him as a fellow black friend, his emotions are outspokenly and transparently expressed in comparison to those with white characters. In addition, Bigger's fight with Gus is where his emotions are stripped off and displayed more candidly. That is why we suggest it can be an appropriate section to concentrate on.

SARTRE'S VIEWS ON EMOTIONS (CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK)

In *Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, Sartre (1939/1948) distinguishes two types of consciousness: "pre-reflective" and "reflective"; the former of which is oriented toward the world and the latter of which is concerned with oneself. In his view, emotions can be transformed to one another in reflective level and any effort to deny one's consciousness in one's emotions such as anger, fear, delight are nothing but masks to hide one's transcendence and agency in choosing a particular way of feeling and thinking. In his way, the origin of emotions becomes clear: "the origin of emotion is a spontaneous and lived degradation of consciousness in the face of the world. What it cannot endure in one way it tries to grasp in another by going to sleep, by approaching the consciousness of sleep, dream, and hysteria" (p.77).

It is crucial to notify what happens during an emotive behaviour from Sartre's (1939/1948) perspective: "In short, in emotion it is the body which, directed by consciousness, changes its relations with the

world in order that the world may change its qualities. If emotion is a joke, it is a joke we believe in (p. 61). It is important to stress that Sartre had "fake emotions" in his mind; however, there is another type of emotion on which Sartre puts his finger: "True emotion is quite otherwise; it is accompanied by belief" (p. 73).

Now, it seems evident that what emotion means to Sartre (1939/1948): an emotion is regarded as the "transformation of the world" (p. 58), thus when facing a world which is too difficult and insurmountable, "we can no longer live in so urgent and difficult a world. All the ways are barred. However, we must act..." (p. 58). Confronting an unpleasant situation, one tries to change the world, an enterprise which in Sartre's way of thinking is impossible to be acquired. To shed light on his definition of emotion and the way one is engaged in it, Sartre provides a tangible example: "I extend my hand to take a bunch of grapes. I can't get it; it's beyond my reach. I shrug my shoulders..."", then in order for the person to eliminate any trouble to pick them, he starts to describe them as "too green". Doing so, a given individual assumes this "will resolve the conflict and eliminate the tension" (p. 61).

Sartre (1939/1948) also delineates specific kinds of emotion and their connotations including fear, sadness, anger and joy. The first emotion Sartre attempts to inspect is fear: "Thus, the true meaning of fear is apparent; it is a consciousness which, through magical behavior, intends to deny an object of the external world, and which will go so far as to annihilate itself in order

to annihilate the object with it" (p. 64). This escape from an object in the world which seems to be obliterated via running away is of no use; because, the fear and the object feared are so intermingled with each other that one lives one's fear even if the object feared does not exist externally.

Moreover, Sartre delineates that "passive sadness" aims "at eliminating the obligation to seek new ways" (1939/1948, p.65). From Sartre's perspective, this type of sadness insists upon transforming the world's structure ascribing a "neutral reality" to it. He asserts that we shun our subjectivity by pretending to be not functioning in fulfilling our plans and projects. Thinking so, "we behave in such a way that the universe no longer requires anything of us" (p.65).

On the other hand, Sartre demonstrates what active sadness is: an individual with this sort of sadness endeavours to replace some problems with some other, through which the world seems to be too strong and hostile to allow us to do actions, in other words, it "demands too much of us" (p. 67). In this case, one may pretend that one is eager and resolute to exert one's power upon difficulties and obstacles, but due to having an invincible rival, namely the world, one's every effort proves to be futile appearing as a "comedy of impotence" (p. 67) which is accompanied by anger, unlike passive sadness that is associated with indifference.

DISCUSSION

Application of Sartre's Views on Emotions to *Native Son*

In this section, we apply Sartre's theories on emotion to *Native Son* to disclose Bigger's behaviour throughout the novel which oscillates between fear, anger and sadness. His early behaviour in the novel before killing Mary is a true example of a character stricken by intense fear. Taking Bigger's behaviour when quarrelling with Gus, his friend, over robbing a white delicatessen's store can shed light on our argument that he is overwhelmed by fake emotions. Firstly, instead of acknowledging his fear of undergoing such a daunting task, he tries to accuse Gus of cowardice due to his delay in coming on time based on their appointment; however, by projecting his fear upon Gus, he craves, according to Sartre's definition stated above, to make his consciousness sleep: "He hated Gus because he knew that Gus was afraid, as even he was; he feared Gus because he felt that Gus would consent and then he would be compelled to go through with the robbery" (Wright, 1940, p.34). The way Bigger becomes hysterical and transforms his fear to anger is clear in his quarrel with Gus: "'You yellow!' Bigger said. 'You scared to rob a white man'" (p. 35). But, Bigger is ignorant of the fact that even by running away from the object he feared, here a white man, he will not succeed to expunge that from his inside and the unity between inside and outside cannot be integrated unless he faces that fear, rather than escaping from it.

The scene where Bigger threatens Gus with a knife is of utmost significance symbolically. Employing a psychological approach in interpreting the scene, Yvonne Robinson Jones (2007) argues that the hand-held knife, “a phallic symbol” (p.44), represents Bigger’s masculinity which intends to subjugate Gus, a weak black companion, through which Bigger can unleash his repressed anger against the white community. Jones continues to mention that Gus’s being forced to kneel before Bigger is a technique that provides Bigger with manhood and constitutes a binary of Bigger as a man and Gus, being emasculated, as a “bitch” (p.45).

We assume that Jones’s analysis of the above scene based on sexual images is precious since it highlights the symbolic implications which uncover Bigger’s inner stimulus to take action. However, we assert that the scene provided above can be probed in terms of other symbolic connotations as well: the pointed knife in Bigger’s hand can demonstrate his emotions are keen (like the blade of the knife itself) and dangerously impulsive (like his inappropriate use of knife, that is, a tool to threaten others). His emotions have lost their primary function to help him be sincere to himself; rather, they confine him in fallacy and self-deception.

Similarly, regardless of the sexual images which Bigger’s rage and his use of knife might symbolise, as Jones states, Bigger’s fight with Gus can unveil an existential emblem as well. When Bigger notices that he is impotent to rob a white man, he acts as the man in Sartre’s example

did: shrugging his shoulders when the grapes were out of reach. Since Bigger recognises that the white people are hard to be defeated, as the grapes being far symbolise one’s reluctance to take any trouble and pick them, he feigns having transcended by directing all his power against a feeble, defenceless black, Gus. Hence, all Bigger does is to pretend to be furious so as to refuse to truly achieve transcendence.

On the other hand, in the scene which Bigger is talking with Gus, he vacillates between active and passive forms of sadness. As stated above, Sartre argues that in passive sadness people act as if the world required nothing of them and stopped acting as though there was nothing to do, but in active sadness people act as if the world, too hostile and strong, required too much of them. When talking to Gus about the superiority of whites, Bigger displays a passive gesture in front of a world which requires action: “In the sky above him a few big white clouds drifted. He puffed silently, relaxed, his mind pleasantly vacant of purpose” (Wright, 1940, p. 28). Bigger pretends that he has no power in changing the status quo, so he plays the role of an infirm creature having no choice of action in a world which expects nothing from him. On the other hand, Bigger imagines that the world is too strong and expects much from him, say, he is engrossed in active sadness later in his conversation with Gus:

“Nothing ever happens”, he complained.

“What do you want to happen?”

"Anything", Bigger said with a wide sweep of his dingy palm, a sweep that included all the possible activities in the world.

(Wright, 1940, p. 31)

Bigger involves himself in active sadness, which is transformed into anger, due to being forced to act in a strong and harsh world which expects a lot of courage from him. That is to say, he pretends to be furious in a world that every single action is doomed to fail because of its strength and invincibility. This rage against the world is actually embedded in Bigger's intense fear. Bigger directs this active sadness to Gus in a sadistic scene that is probably the acme of this type of sadness in the novel. This way, Bigger's placing the knife on Gus's throat and then on his lips, being subsequently accompanied with his sadistic elation, can be an appropriate demonstration of Bigger's fake emotions.

Likewise, Bigger and Gus are also engaged in fake happiness. In a scene where Bigger and Gus start playing white, Bigger exemplifies an individual whose happiness and contentment are the emblematic of an emotionally depthless person. Bigger and Gus embark on playing the roles of white men of power and wealth through which Bigger unveils what he fantasises about when his imagination is to be disentangled. Their mimics of white people make them burst into laughter. However, the boys' unfulfilled fantasies, initially filling them with joy and elation, fade away when Bigger and Gus return to reality:

They hung up imaginary receivers and leaned against the wall and laughed. A street car rattled by. Bigger sighed and swore.

"Goddammit!"

"What's the matter?"

"They don't let us do nothing."

"Who?"

"The white folks."

"You talk like you just now finding that out," Gus said...

... It's just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I'm on the outside of the world peeping in through a knothole in the fence...."

(Wright, 1940, p. 29)

Again as it is evident, emotions abruptly are replaced; that is, happiness gives its place to envy, anger and gloom. It is important for us to know that such erratic behaviour could give rise to Bigger's anger.

It is obvious that Bigger's emotions are transformed into one another in a way that one might become baffled with the emotions one confront. The essence of Bigger's rather unpredictable behaviour in the excerpts chosen above lies in the fact that his emotions replace one another with an approximately high rapidity. This wavering probably arises from Bigger's lack of unity in terms of his feelings. His superficial emotions are apparently compartmentalised and seemingly signify what they are supposed to do; that is, for instance, when Bigger is furious, it seems that he is filled with anger. However, there is no such unity between the signifier and

the signified. Bigger's anger with Gus is a transformed form of fear; as Joyce Ann Joyce (1986) declares: "Bigger's sullen treatment of his family and the violent display of emotions that instigates the fight with Gus spring from his fear" (p. 61).

Joyce ceases to examine the role of fake and original emotions in Bigger's behaviours; however, we claim that Bigger is well aware of the fact that if he displays his fears overtly, he will be disparaged and humiliated by his fellow black friends; hence, observing Bigger's behaviour, we easily discern that he is employing what psychiatrists call the gaslighting technique, that is to say, a technique through which a person denies one's own psychological inconsistencies on the one hand, and projects them on another individual in order to relieve oneself of psychic pressures, on the other.

A noteworthy point to make is that the excerpts from the novel indicate that Bigger's emotions in those scenes are, arguably, fake. In effect, it is Bigger rather than Gus who is extremely afraid of the outcomes of robbery. But instead of having a fair analysis of his and others' emotions, he accuses Gus of being a coward about robbing the white man's store. He does not come to terms with the fact that he fabricates some false emotions including sadness, fear and anger to lessen the pain of his passiveness facing the world. Thus, to put it in Sartre's terms, Bigger's emotions are not accompanied with genuine "beliefs". Deep down, Bigger knows that he himself is the true coward, but self-deceptively, he ascribes his negative feelings to people like Gus.

It is no wonder that one might inquire where the chief and overriding determinants of Bigger's anguish lie. Bigger's internalisation of white omnipresence and almightiness is so intense that the interior function of imagination which Sartre talks about in order for him to transcend is all buried. In a scene conversing with Gus, Bigger discloses his obsessive thinking of white people, divulging that white people live in his stomach (Wright, 1940, p. 32).

We assert that when it comes to Bigger's interiority, he is a petrified being who cannot imagine projects by which he might attain transcendence. If we refer to Sartre's definition of transcendence according to which imagination is the building block of transcendence (because it is through the faculty of imagination that one can improvise one's would-be existence in the world), we can clearly understand the adverse condition in which Bigger's imagination is trapped. While Bigger's interiority is turbulent, he cannot envision any transcendence for himself which is the exterior manifestation of his imagination. Had Bigger enjoyed a unified and uninjured imagination, he would probably have gained transcendence.

This incapability affects his emotions. Not having true emotions, Bigger remains in "pre-reflective" level of consciousness which in his case is a distorted one. As stated before, in pre-reflective consciousness, people are conscious of the world and not themselves. The protagonist is not conscious of himself as an agent who can have true emotions in order to transcend himself. To transcend himself and go beyond

his status quo, Bigger needs to reach the reflective level of consciousness, but he limits himself to pre-reflective mode and as a consequence fails to attain transcendence as an existentially autonomous individual. It is worth mentioning that, apparently, the concepts of "pre-reflective" and "reflective" consciousness have not been studied in *Native Son* before the present article.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion to be drawn from this article is that every human being, regardless of social status, skin colour, and inherited situation, to name a few, cannot elude ontological transcendence. To relate this statement to the novel, Bigger is doomed to acknowledge his transcendence as an autonomous human being; however, clinging to some unexpressed but acted out pretexts, he negates the existence of a very human fact named transcendence. In order to overcome the psychological dilemma with which he was grappling, he invoked the aid of his emotions. We indicated how his emotions lacked consistence throughout the selected pieces, one transforming into another incessantly. His inauthentic, fake emotions compelled him to live at pre-reflective level and did not allow him to experience the reflective phase in terms of his consciousness. When it is said Bigger neglected his autonomy, it is not to say that he was not surrounded by hostile circumscribers; rather, it means that no matter how harsh the situation was, Bigger could have transcended it ontologically. In other words, Bigger could have exercised

ontological transcendence to some extent, but this potentiality was shut off by his ubiquitous dishonest, artificial emotions.

Sartre modified his theories on transcendence throughout his career. There is an additional area for further research that has not been highlighted by the studies undertaken for this article. It is related to the huge obstacles such as economic conditions, violent relations and racial problems in one's path to transcendence. In fact, Sartre investigated these obstacles in his later works. Sartre, for instance, wrote prefaces to some books by colonial intellectuals such as Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon in which he asserted that violence could affect the black man's transcendence. In our article, we drew upon Sartre's early theories on transcendence in which only internal determinants such as Bigger's fake emotions affected his transcendence. Since external determinants can provide the reader with a better and more realistic understanding of Bigger's transcendence, further research could evaluate Bigger's non-ontological transcendence by regarding him not only as a human being with unique individuality but also as a social being who grapples with a plethora of hindrances.

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