



Autobiography in Sarah Kofman (1934–1994)

Mélissa Thériault

Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

Autobiography is a central concept in the work of Sarah Kofman a French philosopher who was deeply influenced by existentialism and psychoanalysis. By analyzing the work of Auguste Comte, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche and her own traumatic experience (she lived as a Hidden Child during World War II), Kofman could link “abstract” concepts with the personal issues those philosophers had to deal with — namely a misogynist attitude possibly related to their difficulties with women, who they argued to be irrational. Afterwards, she concluded that the life of a philosopher is carved in the concept he or she crafts, and that it is impossible for any writer to write from an “abstract” point of view. On the contrary, objectivity hides, most of the time, subjective motivations and beliefs under the mask of rationality. Consequently, philosophy should be seen as the result of a self-discovering process that can only be achieved by autobiographical writing, and not through a “quest for truth” process.

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