

Sartre (II):

Authenticity and Bad Faith

A. Bad Faith

- Radical freedom is a burden.
- A being-for-itself desires to be a being-in-itself; in other words, desires to be a determined being, and retreats in bad faith.
- A waiter plays at being a waiter:

‘His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid... He bends forward a little too eagerly... Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker... He is playing... but what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing *at being* a waiter in a café’ (BN, p.82).

‘[T]he waiter in the café can not be immediately a café waiter in the sense that this inkwell is an inkwell, or the glass is a glass. It is by no means that he can not form reflective judgments or concepts about his condition. He knows well what it ‘means’: the obligation of getting up at five o’clock, of sweeping the floor of the shop before the restaurant opens, of starting the coffee pot going, etc... It is a ‘representation’ for others and for myself, which means I can be he only in *representation*. **But if I represent myself as him, I am not he;** I am separated from him as the object from the subject, **separated by nothing**, but this nothing isolates me from him. I can not be he, I can only play at *being* him... What I attempt to realise is a being-in-itself of the café waiter,... as if it were not

my free choice to get up each morning at five o'clock or remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired. As if from the very fact that I sustain this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side, **as if I did not constitute myself as one *beyond my condition***. Yet there is no doubt that ***I am*** in a sense a café waiter – otherwise could I not just call myself a diplomat or a reporter? But if I am one, this can not be in a mode of being-in-itself. ***I am a waiter in the mode of being what I am not***' (BN, p.83). (Bold emphasis is mine.)

As a being-for-itself the man goes *beyond* or *transcends* his being a waiter, but he attempts to overemphasise his facticity at the expense of his transcendence.

I attempt to **realise** myself as something determined, as a being-in-itself. Of course, I am really a being-for-itself capable of acting freely, but I shirk from my freedom in bad faith. A waiter then **is** not a waiter in the sense that an inkwell **is** an inkwell, but, despite this fact, the waiter is trying to be just that:

‘[T]he waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to *realize* it. This obligation is not different from that which is imposed on all tradesman... The public demands of them that they realize it as ceremony... A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer’ (BN, p.82).

B. Other People

I am sitting in the park alone when another person enters. Things flee from me because I am aware that the park, that used to centre on me alone, can now centre about this other person—with me being just another entity in their world:

‘I am in a public park. Not far away there is a lawn, and along the edge of the lawn there are benches. A man passes by those benches. I see this man; I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man... If I were to think of him as being only a puppet, I should apply to him the categories which I ordinarily use to group temporal-spatial ‘things’. That is, I should apprehend him as being ‘beside’ the benches, two yards and twenty inches from the lawn, as exercising a certain pressure on the ground, etc. His relation to the objects would be of the purely additive type; this means that I could have him disappear without the relations of the other objects around him being perceptibly *changed*... Perceiving him as a *man*, on the other hand, is not to apprehend an additive relation between the chair and him; it is to register an organisation *without distance* of the things in my universe around that privileged object. To be sure, the lawn remains two yards and twenty inches away from him, but it is also a lawn bound to him in a relation which at once transcends distance and contains it... We are dealing with a relation which is without *parts*, given at one stroke, inside of which there unfolds a spatiality which is not *my* spatiality; for instead of a grouping *toward me* of the objects, there is now an orientation *which flees from me*’ (BN, p.278).

‘Thus suddenly an object has appeared which has stolen my world from me. Everything is still in place; everything still exists for me; but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of a new object. The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting’ (BN, p.279).

Ronald Grimsley: ‘the other’s presence not only disrupts my world by making me realize that it’s not completely my own, but he also creates

the feeling that I too have been absorbed into that world as one of its objects. By looking at me... the other person transforms me into an object and so deprives me of my 'transcendence' and 'subjectivity'... The ultimate effect is that I become an object in my own eyes and not merely in his... Moreover, by becoming aware of my own alienation I acknowledge that the other is no longer an object but a subject' (Grimsley, 1960, p.119).

William Barrett: 'To the other person who looks at me from the outside, I seem an object, a thing; my subjectivity with its inner freedom escapes his gaze. Hence his tendency to convert me into the object he sees. The gaze of the Other penetrates to the depths of my existence, freezes and congeals it' (Barrett, 1990, p.257).

An eavesdropper or voyeur notices he is being watched, or being gazed at, and suddenly he becomes conscious that he has a 'foundation outside himself':

'Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through a keyhole. I am alone... I am a pure consciousness of things... [B]ehind the door a spectacle is presented as 'to be seen', a conversation as 'to be heard'. The door, the keyhole are at once both instruments and obstacles; they are presented as 'to be handled with care'; the keyhole is given as 'to be looked through close by and a little to one side', etc. Hence from this moment 'I do what I have to do'... My consciousness sticks to my acts, it is my acts... My attitude, for example, has no 'outside'; it is a pure process of relating the instrument (the keyhole) to the end to be attained (the spectacle to be seen), a pure mode of losing myself in the world... But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me!... [A]ll of a sudden I am conscious of myself as escaping myself... in that I have my foundation outside myself' (BN, pp.283-84).

When I experience shame, I become conscious of myself as a being that is outside of itself. The feeling of shame is an awareness that I am an object that exists through the other's look; it's an awareness that **I am** indeed the person that the other is judging in some way, such as being an eavesdropper:

‘For the Other, *I am seated as this inkwell is on the table*; for the Other, *I am leaning over the keyhole as this tree is bent by the wind*. Thus for the Other I have stripped myself of my transcendence’ (BN, p.286).

Shame is an example of self-consciousness:

‘Consider for example shame. Here we are dealing with a mode of consciousness . . . it is a non-positional self-consciousness, consciousness (of) itself as shame . . . its structure is intentional; it is a shameful apprehension *of* something and that something is *me*. I am ashamed of what I *am*. Shame therefore realizes an intimate relation of myself to myself’ (BN, p.245).

In so far as the other sees me as an object, I succeed in being for others what I can not succeed for myself. Moreover, the other person sees me as I can never see my self:

‘I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculpts it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it. The Other holds a secret – that secret of what I am’ (BN, p.286).

‘I grasp the Other's look at the very centre of my act as the solidification and alienation of my own possibilities’ (BN, p.287).

‘Thus I, who in so far as I am my possibles, am what I am not and am not what I am – behold now I *am* somebody!’ (BN, p.287)

The look is something we find alienating. We respond by looking back. I ‘attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other’ by objectifying the Other:

‘In view of this presence of the Other-as-subject to me in and through my assumed object-ness, we can see that my making an Object out of the Other must be the second moment in my relation to him’ (BN, p.310).

‘My defensive reaction to my object-state will cause the Other to appear before me in the capacity of this or that object’ (BN, p.319).

‘Everything which may be said of me in my relations with the Other applies to him as well. While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. ... Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others’ (BN, p.386).

Relationships between human beings are inevitably antagonistic. Hell is other people (*Huis Clos*, Sec.5).

Bibliography

- Ronald Grimsley, *Existentialist Thought* (Cardiff University of Wales Press, 1960).
- William Barrett, *Irrational Man* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes, introduction by Mary Warnock, preface by Richard Eyre (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 [1943]), particularly Part I, Sec. 2, and Part III, Sec. 1.
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos* (1945).

Reading

Essential

Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Part I, Sec. 2, and Part III, Sec. 1. Accessible online at: [Being and Nothingness \(antilogicalism.com\)](http://antilogicalism.com)

Recommended

William Barrett, *Irrational Man* (New York: Anchor Books, 1958), Ch.10.

Further

Santoni, Ronald E, *Bad Faith Good Faith* (Temple University Press, 1995), chapter 2. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bswt6.2>.

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H. J. Blackham, *Six Existentialist Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 1952), Ch.6. Hard copy only, but excellent resource.

Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), Ch. 5. Hard copy only, but excellent resource.