

What do you understand by bad-faith as this notion is used by Sartre? In illustrating the patterns and peculiarities of bad-faith use the material from "Childhood of a Leader", "In Camera" and/or your own experience. In your discussion bring out any difficulties or inadequacies you find in Sartre's account of bad-faith.

Bad-faith, as Sartre describes it, is a kind of self-deception which the mind uses to protect itself from the uncertainties and unpleasant aspects of life. Uncertainty arises from the fact that as individuals we alone are responsible for all our choices, and that the things which seem ~~to~~ reassuring to us, such as an essential nature or ultimate reality, can never be known with certainty. Unpleasantness, on the other hand, is involved in many aspects of social living, particularly in the importance we attach to what others think of us. Several aspects of bad-faith are illustrated in the following three examples from my own experience. The first shows how bad-faith utilizes the different modes involved in being human. The second contrasts it with the ordinary lie, and demonstrates how evidence is misused to sustain it, and the third indicates the difficulties involved in returning to good-faith.

All humans have three co-existing and equally valid modes of being. Being-for-itself refers to our conscious lived experience. Being-in-itself is what we are as an object in the world, and being-for-others is what we are for others as a system of behaviour. Recently I found myself for the first time in the open door of an aeroplane at 2,500' above the ground wearing a parachute, and with my senses being bombarded with wind, noise, cold and fear. I had already undergone the necessary training, watched three others leave the aircraft before me, and shuffled sick ~~to~~ the stomach towards the exit. Now, with five other ~~new~~ nervous first-timers in line behind me, I awaited the instructor's shout to "Go!". I went. But in that same instant I was an object just as my pen is an object when I push it off the edge of the table. I deny that I freely chose to jump because to have involved myself in such choosing would have been to recognize, in anguish, the possibility of ~~not~~ not jumping - of remaining

paralyzed in fear at the open doorway, of annoying the others waiting behind me, of wasting the training and psychological buildup to this moment, and of being from that moment onwards a coward. Why then did I jump if I did not choose to? Because I had objectified myself and had only to wait for the instructor to decide my destiny and 'push' me with his imperative command. So in my terror I was at least spared the anguish of making a decision. It is easy to be pushed. In this experience I escaped the freedom of my being-for-itself by acknowledging only my being-in-itself.

We cannot carry out such self-deception as convincingly as we can deceive others, however, because we are always pre-reflectively aware of the truth which resides in our same consciousness.

When my wife and I went house-hunting we spent several months looking before finding one which we both liked. I then set into motion the complicated chain of legal and financial requirements for buying a house, but before long I learned of the future possibility of the nearby park and views being replaced by heavy industry. By that time I had had enough of house-hunting, and to pull out of the deal would have involved the embarrassment of notifying all parties concerned that we had changed our mind. I 'decided' that I was fixed into the choice to buy that particular house, even though we had not actually committed ourselves to the deal by an exchange of contracts. Of course I did not tell my wife about this 'minor' and 'remote' possibility regarding our purchase. She would have made a fuss about nothing. Rather it was easier to remind her (and myself) about its many good features: inexpensive, solid, big garage... . Even being advised of the high robbery risk in that area was hardly significant enough to tell her about. Nor was the noise when a certain runway was being used. And the discovery that the fenced-off enclosure 100 metres away was an underground bulk oil storage depot couldn't possibly present any risk - otherwise why would it be so close to other houses. Without ~~xxx~~ fully realizing it the number of undesirable features had grown to a level which I would never have originally accepted, but to openly acknowledge it to myself now would have put me back into the less certain and very inconvenient state of being homeless. Fortunately I was spared this anguish because my wife was advised by her workmates of the industrial rezoning. Her decisive rejection of

that house then turned my possibility of cancelling the sale into a fate to which I could be resigned. Can I say that I had deceived myself as I had deceived my wife? Of course not, because I always had some pre-reflective awareness of my project, no matter how much I tried to ignore it. This experience also shows how one can misuse evidence in order to support what one has already decided to believe.

The difficulty of returning to good-faith, ie sincerity and authenticity, is that this option rarely looks very attractive. It involves letting go of that which makes us comfortable, secure or privileged, and offers no reward for this sacrifice. At my school I was the only member of my religion. I spent most of my childhood with the vague ~~xxxxxx~~ feeling (never expressed) that I was somehow better, or more knowledgable than my school friends. Not having reflected on the basis for this feeling, the possibility of it not being so had not presented itself to me, so I had nothing to fear in holding this belief. I was simply lacking in self-knowledge.

Gradually I became aware that many people possessed good qualities which I lacked, or were able to explain problems of life and society better than I could. Nevertheless I secretly maintained my feeling of superiority as if holding the 'true' belief was enough to justify me. To recognize the truth that I was spiritually inferior in some respects would have been painful, and possibly have required me rejecting the religion which made me feel secure. Had I done so all my past efforts would have been devalued, my present less certain, and my future would require starting at the bottom again by re-establishing my beliefs in good-faith.

Fortunately I was able to come face-to-face with my shortcomings when I learned that the tenets of my religion promoted such inward reflection, ~~and offered~~ The rewards of being, in God's eyes and in reality, a better soul, with more self awareness and purity of motives, were sufficient to enable me to recognize my shortcomings without feeling that I was losing anything of importance. I was able to escape from bad-faith here because a reward was offered for the effort in so doing. Many beliefs do not offer such a reward, and so there is no motivation to

escape from bad-faith. Furthermore Sartre's writings, as far as I know, do not offer much encouragement either.

However this experience is not enough to say that I am now completely out of bad-faith. The question still arises as to whether my belief in my religion itself can possibly be held in good-faith. It seems to me that Sartre's analysis of certain basic experiences is insufficient to refute the possibility of some essential reality - a 'spiritual' world. In the explanatory system which he bases on these experiences, our 'longing for certainty' and our 'feeling that an essential reality does exist' is placed in the position of being an unavoidable problem, a motive for bad-faith. But surely these feelings could also be seen as a universal and fundamental experience, as revealing as 'anguish' or 'the look',^{qre} especially where such experiences do not involve misuse of evidence or a denial of personal responsibility. For example, the experience I have of prayer seems to me to be more than a mere self-deceptive feeling of well-being. After sincere prayer I find that my thoughts become less selfish, my perspective improves, I become less anxious, am more efficient, easier to get along with, less lazy, I concentrate better, and I feel optimistic and confident. Is all this solely an exercise in bad-faith based on some ~~thing~~ imaginary creator?

If religious experience can be seen as a valid part of an existential framework, and as real as our 'certainty' that, say, the ceiling is not about to fall on top of us, then there are grounds for being optimistic that the dilemma of choosing between anguish and bad-faith is unnecessary. Our beliefs would be something external to our spiritual reality, and thus we would not feel threatened by changing them if we discovered that they were held in bad-faith. The psychological and social problems which stem from anguish and bad-faith would be avoidable. Nevertheless Sartre is to be admired for the insight which has account of these very real experiences provides.