

II. Bad Faith

Philosophy 157

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Nihilating Possibility

- The nature of conscious being is to be conscious of the nothingness of its being
- There is more to this than envisioning a *négalité*
- Consciousness nihilates what is a possibility for another human reality
- The slave or prisoner's possibility is nihilated, and the master or jailer nihilate
- The master, jailer, "man of resentment" live the Not, and the ironist expresses it more subtly
- There are many kinds of nihilation, so focus will be on one kind: bad faith

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Bad Faith and Lying

- Is to show bad faith to lie to one's self?
- Bad faith is a lie, and lying is a negative attitude
- But lying implies possession of the truth
- Consciousness is mobilized in service of the lie
- The inner structure of consciousness is not touched

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The Other

- Lying is a phenomenon based in the relation between myself and the Other
- The Other can take the lie for truth
- Lying affirms that my consciousness is hidden from that of the Other
- "It utilizes for its own profit the ontological duality of myself and myself in the eyes of the Other"

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Lying to One's Self

- Bad faith cannot be based on the duality of myself vs. how I am for others—I cannot be hidden from myself
- My consciousness is unitary
- Bad faith is not inflicted from the outside, but comes from one's self
- To lie to myself, I must know the truth that I am trying to conceal

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The Translucency of Consciousness

- "The being of consciousness is the consciousness of being"
- If I am in bad faith, I am conscious of being in bad faith
- But this would mean that I am in good faith with respect to being in bad faith, which annuls the bad faith
- So bad faith is "evanescent," and the psychic structure is "metastable," prone to sudden changes
- Nonetheless, it can be a durable form, and a normal lifestyle for many people

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The Divided Psyche

- The concrete fact of lying must be interpreted, because it cannot be traced to its source
- Freud's "ego" is detached from the unconscious "id"
- I (the ego) only receives passively the products of the id
- The activity of the id is only understood probabilistically
- The Other in the form of the analyst, or myself simulating an analyst-Other, is needed to unite the divided psyche

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The Psychoanalytic Account of Bad Faith

- There is a lie without a liar
- The source of the lie is the id, but it is not a conscious, intentional being
- So the inter-subjective Other lies at the heart of subjective being
- But this is belied by the resistance to the truth about to be revealed in analysis

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What Resists Analysis?

- It is not the ego which resists: it only reasons probabilistically like the analyst
- Otherwise, it is in bad faith, which is not then explained psychoanalytically
- It is not the id, either, as it aims at revealing itself
- It can only be the censor, but then it must know what it is repressing and understand it as something to be repressed
- So the censor is conscious of itself
- It is in bad faith: being conscious of an instinct so as not to be conscious of it

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Further Criticisms of Psychoanalysis

- Psychoanalysis merely uses metaphor to solve the problem verbally
- The double action of attraction (id) and repulsion (ego) is localized in the censor
- The repressed drive can disguise itself only if it is conscious, of being repressed for what it is, and of its project of disguise
- The unity of the conscious and unconscious is achieved through magic
- And "repression" can be explained by distraction, a form of bad faith

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A Woman in Bad Faith

- A woman is undecided about her relationship with her companion: she is in anguish
- She refuses to interpret any of his actions as expressive of desire, but instead sees them as directed toward her personality
- He holds her hand, and she turns the conversation to lofty subjects
- Her hand becomes an inert thing

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Maintaining Bad Faith

- The woman has reduced the companion's actions to being-in-itself (facticity)
- She permits herself to enjoy his desire, but as not being what it is (transcendence)
- She realizes herself as not being her own body, which she treats as being-in-itself
- "It is a certain art of forming contradictory concepts which unite in themselves both an idea and the negation of that idea"
- Bad faith attempts to preserve their difference in their identity, by abrupt shifts

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Facticity and Transcendence

- Love is popularly viewed as facticity and transcendence
- As facticity, it is sensuality and egoism
- As transcendence, it is spiritual
- “I am too great for myself”
- “He has become what he was”
- Paradoxical expressions show how we slide from facticity to transcendence and back

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Other Instruments of Bad Faith

- Another basic instrument of bad faith is the relation of being-for-myself and being-for-others
- Also, being-in-the-midst-of-the-world (inert) and being-in-the-world (active)
- Further, past, present and future (“temporal ekstases”)
- All have the same structure: being what is not, and not being what is

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Sincerity

- Sincerity is the antithesis of bad faith
- It is a demand to be for one’s self rather only what one is
- This implies that the principle of identity does not hold for humans: we can be for ourselves what we are not
- To be sincere, we would have to make ourselves what we are

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The Waiter

- A waiter in the café overdoes his role, which looks to us like a game
- He presents himself mechanically
- He is playing at being a waiter in a café
- He plays with his condition in order to realize it, to become what he is
- Society has many precautions to imprison a man in what he is
- He is not the representation of what he is to be
- He is a waiter in the mode of being what he is not

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I am Not What I Am

- I am a waiter, not a politician or journalist
- But I am not a waiter in the sense of being-in-itself
- I make choices that keep me playing the role of waiter, but I could stop at any time
- I constitute myself as something beyond the role of a waiter
- Nor am I any of my attitudes or actions
- “On all sides I escape being and yet—I am”

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Sadness

- Sadness is an consciousness that magically transforms a situation that is too urgent
- I am not my sadness: it comes and goes
- Sadness is not a being which is put on
- The being-in-itself of sadness regulates its meaning, but it does not constitute the sadness
- I can only become sad if I am not sad

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The Being of Consciousness

- My consciousness is, in the sense that it is a being for another
- When I look at the other, I find absence
- I do not know how the other will act, so the other is not a being-in-itself for me
- The being-in-itself of the other consciousness disappears in freedom
- “Its being-in-itself ‘here and now’ is not-to-be”

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The Impossibility of Sincerity

- I am not an other to myself
- My consciousness of myself makes itself
- So it sustains being, but it is not being
- So one cannot be what one is
- And one cannot be sincere in this sense
- We constantly experience this embarrassing constraint
- When I try to be sincere, I constitute myself, thus making myself what I am not
- Sincerity is a phenomenon of bad faith

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The Homosexual

- A homosexual refuses to admit his homosexuality
- He attributes his actions to various contingencies
- He is right in the sense that he is free
- But he is in bad faith because he understands what he is not in the sense of not falling under a category

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The Critic

- The critic urges the homosexual to admit that he is homosexual
- He wishes to reduce the man to being-in-itself
- Yet he promises an escape to freedom and good will
- This is an example of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic

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Courage?

- Suppose I generally behave in a cowardly way, so that I “am” a coward
- In sincerity, I can admit that I am a coward, but then I am reducing myself to being-in-itself
- In bad faith, I deny that I am a coward, but do so only by equivocating on “what I am not”
- At the same time, I am making myself what I am, which conflicts with my claim that I “am” not a coward
- In both cases, my action undercuts itself

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Sincerity and Bad Faith

- Sincerity is in bad faith, since it is a denial of the freedom that I know I am
- The failure of sincerity is required for the possibility of bad faith
- If sincerity were successful, I could be reduced to a mere being-in-itself
- In that case, my cowardliness would be one thing among others
- I would not be able to determine myself as courageous in the act of declaring it

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Bad Faith and Belief

- Bad faith is not a cynical lie or certainty
- Bad faith is a belief falling short of certainty
- How can I be persuaded without certainty?
- I am and am not persuaded, so bad faith is another “two-faced concept”
- If I recognized my bad faith for what it was, it would be a cynical lie (if believed to be bad) or good faith (if believed to be innocent)
- Bad faith must hide itself in bad faith

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Non-Persuasive Evidence

- Bad faith must take the world to be what it is not and not be what it is
- Bad faith resolves to require not too much evidence
- “This original project of bad faith is a decision in bad faith on the nature of faith”
- The decision is spontaneous, not voluntary
- The metastable nature of bad faith is projected onto the structure of being and evidence

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Good Faith

- Good faith is simple faith: accepting as certain what is uncertain
- But one knows (or is non-thetically conscious) that what is accepted as certain is uncertain
- So belief undermines itself: it is “a being which questions its own being”
- The ideal of good faith is that of escaping this transcendence, taking refuge in being-in-itself
- Every belief in good faith is impossible, and this is what makes bad faith possible
- Bad faith takes refuge in “not-believing-what-one-believes”

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Self-Recovery?

- Bad faith flees what it is
- This reveals a disintegration in the heart of being
- Good faith flees the disintegration toward the in-itself
- Good faith is not sustainable, because it is contrary to the nature of consciousness
- Perhaps the integrity of being can be restored through authenticity

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