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**GOOD FAITH VERSUS BAD FAITH**

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In this study, I am interested in presenting the distinction between good faith and bad faith in the Sartrean corpus. I would show that in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre is in dialectical engagement with freedom, action, and responsibility in order to illuminate bad faith. What it is to act from a state of bad faith that is what characteristics make traits of bad faith in the Sartrean thought, I would deliberate.

Key words: Freedom, action, bad faith, candor

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In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre considers candor or sincerity as anti-thesis of bad faith. Bad faith, indeed, is false living. It is a lie where living is concerned. It is a lie associated with life or existence. In fact, it is a *living lie* or a *lived lie*. Bad faith is a mode of being or mode of existence. Using his famous terminology, Sartre says that in bad faith being is what it is not, and is not what it is. This means according to Sartre that I am trying to be what I am not (play acting) and I am not what I am (my real self) that is I am not my real or authentic self. In bad faith instead of directing negation outwards I direct it towards myself.

**PLAY ACTING AND LYING IN SARTRE**

Sartre argues that when I lie to someone I lie with an attitude of making him/her believe that I am not lying. In fact, I lie with an attitude or behavior, 'I am telling you the truth and would not dream to deceive you.' So the lie is told to someone/onlooker by me (liar) with an intention to deceive the other (onlooker) but I do not hide this intention of deceiving the other from myself. The intention to deceive other (onlooker) is concealed from the other (onlooker) but not hidden from myself. So when the liar says, 'Believe me, this is true, I cannot cheat you', the liar is only playacting in the eyes of his companion the intention of a sincere

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character. And this character precisely is an unreal character which does not exist. A truthful character is only imitated in the eyes of the other or it is only played for the other. This is inner negation. The truthful character does not exist inside me, but I only go about as if I am a truthful person (split-personality/inauthenticity).

So from the aforementioned analysis it's clear that it is I who affect myself with bad faith. It is my personality or consciousness which is in bad faith. Indeed, I am in bad faith. Sincerity is a mode of existence and not of knowledge or thought. The existential philosophy of the champion of sincerity; Jean-Paul Sartre; poses a stiff challenge for human beings. According to Sartre, man has been separated by nothingness from what it is and from what it will be. Hence, man cannot become sincere by just a single act of sincerity. He has the constant obligation of being sincere by constantly making himself sincere. Long-continued and steadfast *acts* of sincerity are needed. Strict performance of sincere *actions* is required. Commitment has to be firm and total.

A single act or instance of commitment is not enough. Commitment has to be total, perpetual, and constant for it to be really a commitment. One must be consistent in one's commitment and this is what good faith is and its opposite would be bad faith. Candor or sincerity can anytime miss its goal and slip back into bad faith, therefore man has the obligation to constantly make himself sincere or candid, that is, to consistently remain committed to the project of good faith. Sartre recapitulates this point in chapter 2 of *Being and Nothingness*, just before the section 'The "Faith" of Bad Faith', by the example of the coward. The coward is a coward but he apprehends himself as "*not being cowardly*." <sup>1</sup> The coward exists in the mode of not being what he is. The coward is coward but he exists (lives unreally) as not being a coward (a hollow sham). The coward not only denies his cowardice before others but he is also not able to accept his cowardice to himself and lives before others (unreally) as if he is courageous (a sham). Sartre points out that if the coward lives in the mode of "not-being-what-one-is-not" <sup>2</sup> then he is in good faith. It means that the coward is not courageous and he accepts before himself and before others that he is not courageous. This is good faith. So in good faith, I should not be what I am not, that is if I do not have the quality of courage I should not apprehend myself or project myself as possessing the quality of courage. I should not deny the quality (cowardice) which I possess. This mode of existence would be authentic or good faith. In bad faith I shy away from seeing the being which I am, that is if I am a fragile, weak person in some sense and in some area, which I may not be in other areas, I shy

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away from seeing myself as a fragile, weak person in that particular area. In good faith I do not shy away from seeing the being which I am that is I do not shy away from seeing myself as I am. If *I am* a coward I should see myself as a coward and accept myself as I am, that is as a coward, and not as *I am not* that is as a courageous person. If I am a coward then I should not accept myself as I am not being that coward, that is I should not accept myself as a courageous person. In good faith I see myself as myself and accept myself as myself with all my weak qualities, denying none of them. Thus, if I acknowledge that I am pusillanimous or timorous, which indeed I am, then, I am in good faith.

Sartre has clarified that in bad faith there is an inner disintegration of human personality and what makes the faith of bad faith bad is that man wishes to be this disintegration “and it is this disintegration which bad faith wishes to be.”<sup>3</sup>

However, in good faith man wishes to come out of this split-personality and lead an integrated life. So I have spelled out clearly in the Sartrean vein that the faith of bad faith and faith of good faith are two different phenomena and not one and the same thing as generally understood by people. Moreover, “Man can not be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all.”<sup>4</sup> Since consciousness is not externally motivated man is fully responsible for his actions. He cannot be partly blamed or partly exonerated. He is to be either fully blamed or wholly exonerated. If a glass breaks from my hands due to my mistake, the mistake is wholly mine. I cannot claim that the glass broke due to half of my mistake. So bad faith is also about not owning one’s mistake before oneself, it’s about not fully owning myself before *my self*. If I claim that the mistake was only partly mine then I am hiding my freedom and projecting a pseudo-self. I am projecting myself falsely as being partly right when I am totally wrong which is a sort of self-contradiction or self-deception. It is a diminution of the self. I exhibit an irresponsible attitude. I am trying to shuffle out of my responsibilities. This type of attitude the existentialist detest and Sartre calls it *mauvaise foi*.

#### Freedom and Action

Human freedom in the philosophy of Sartre is revealed in and through action. Choice is identical with action in his philosophy. Choice involves action so that choice can be separated from a mere wish. Sartre asserts, “Thus we shall not say that a prisoner is always free to go out of prison, which would be absurd, nor that he is always free to long for release, which

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would be an irrelevant truism, but that he is always free to try to escape (or get himself liberated); that is, that whatever his condition may be, he can project his escape and learn the value of his project by undertaking some action. Our description of freedom, since it does not distinguish between choosing and doing, compels us to abandon at once the distinction between the intention and the act.”<sup>5</sup>

Man whether he acts under passion or volition he acts under freedom for it is the for-itself which has to choose and decide whether it must act by passion or by volition to attain the ends projected by the for-itself. Clarifying by an example Sartre says that a person whose life is in danger may run away under a fit of emotion and another person may choose to confront the danger, though both the person have the same end that is preservation of life, the difference lies only in the means chosen to achieve the end. One chose to act emotionally and another chose to act volitionally. “Therefore the for-itself appears as the free foundation of its emotions as of its volitions. My fear *is* free and manifests my freedom; I have put all my freedom into my fear, and I have chosen myself as fearful in this or that circumstance. Under other circumstances I shall exist as deliberate and courageous, and I shall have put all my freedom into my courage.”<sup>6</sup> In Sartre’s view, there is no such thing as courageous or cowardly temperament. I only make myself coward or a courageous person by my *actions*, therefore, the coward is responsible for his cowardice. Passion, emotional rage, etc. cannot justify my action. “In relation to freedom there is no privileged psychic phenomenon. All my “modes of being” manifest freedom equally since they are all ways of being my own nothingness.”<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, Sartre considers inferiority complex as a mode of for-itself which it freely chooses. The for-itself chooses to be inferior before others. “Thus the inferiority complex is a free and global project of myself as inferior before others; it is the way in which I choose to assume my being-for-others,…”<sup>8</sup> My condition of living as a person of inferiority complex is a free choice of myself in the world, I am not compelled or forced to live in such a way, rather it is I who chose to live in this mode.

Freedom is exercised in certain definite situations and the situation is governed by a coefficient of adversity which reveals my freedom. “There is freedom only in a *situation*, and there is a situation only through freedom. Human-reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human-reality *is*.”<sup>9</sup> Thus in the philosophy of Sartre, “To be free is to-be -free-to-do, and it is to-be-free-in-the-world.”<sup>10</sup> Sartre considers man as

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absolutely free and also totally responsible. “Thus I am absolutely free and absolutely responsible for my situation. But I am never free except *in situation*.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, there are no accidents in life and man is responsible for his actions. Responsibility is the rational outcome of man’s freedom and it is the unique character of the *for-itself* that it is without any excuse. Man cannot excuse himself for actions perpetrated by him. He is free without any intermission. He has to carry the burden of the responsibility. He cannot rid himself of the responsibility. He cannot act evasively with respect to his freedom. In fact, “I am condemned to be wholly responsible for myself.”<sup>12</sup> Even if I choose to not to take the responsibility of my acts or to not to be responsible for my actions, I still choose to flee my responsibility. Since I have chosen to flee the responsibility part of my acts, I am still responsible for my this choice to flee the responsibility of my action. Thus in no way I can escape the responsibility factor of my action. In a startling way Sartre declares, “I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free.”<sup>13</sup>

The contention of Ronald Santoni, Yiwei Zheng, and Lior Levy examined

Well, my own first and strongest impression of Sartre is that he is a master interpreter of life or lived experience. Sartre was not only a philosopher, essayist, psychoanalyst, and a novelist but he was also primarily a confirmed existentialist which one should not forget. People have riffled through *Being and Nothingness* simply as an abstract philosophical treatise. In my view, it stands outside classification because the example contained in *Being and Nothingness* are not obscure or remote, they are all practical examples related with life, whether it be of the gambler, or of the café-waiter, or of the coward, or of the emphatic beauty on date. Sartre is more interested in making people interested in life or existence. For him, life is like a match and the ball is in the individual’s court. No matter, how much confined or inconsistent one may feel in life, one should still love life and live life for it is never short of freedom, fullness, richness, beauty, greatness, fineness, and its subtleties. “Every project of freedom is an *open project* and not a closed project.”<sup>14</sup> The charm and beauty of existence comprises in living its charm and beauty rather than knowing, and which Sartre has emphasized. Here, I also take the opportunity to examine Ronald Santoni and

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Yiwei Zheng in the light of my impression of Sartre. Ronald Santoni, in his work ‘*Bad Faith, Good Faith, and Authenticity in Sartre’s Early Philosophy*’ has taken a basic and plain position with regard to good faith and bad faith. He considers good faith as acknowledging one’s freedom and responsibility and bad faith as just the opposite. Well, Santoni deserves professional compliments for explicating the distinction, but in my view, if I am not mistaken, Santoni overlooked the point of life with regard to good faith and bad faith underlined in *Being and Nothingness*.

Yiwei Zheng in a plausible article published in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (Summer,1997) Vol. XXXV, captioned ‘‘Ontology and Ethics in Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*: On the Conditions of the Possibility of Bad Faith’’ considered good faith and bad faith as belief projects. Once again, if I am not mistaken, Zheng considers, in the absolute sense, good faith and bad faith both as bad and as corrupted modes of being which according to Sartre is not the case. Zheng seems to have taken a quaint view of the existential notion. Irrespective of the constraints of life, man is perpetually free in the philosophy of Sartre. In fact, the making of man is possible because there is a co-efficient of adversity in life. Above all, no matter how much one may feel the trammels of freedom, life still has outlets galore. Zheng seems to have evaded the point of life in his speculation. ‘‘To be free is to-be-free-to-change. Freedom implies therefore the existence of an environment to be changed: obstacles to be cleared, tools to be used.’’<sup>15</sup> states Sartre.

Well, Lior Levy in a gripping article, ‘‘Sartre and Ricoeur on Productive Imagination’’, published in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*; March 7, 2014; DOI: 10.1111/sjp.12049; argues that Antoine Roquentin (*Nausea*) lost his sense of personal identity and sees the world as devoid of meaning and is gripped by a feeling of ‘absurd’. In my view, Levy has aligned her views on *Nausea* with the views of Peter Poiana and Jennifer Church when Levy considers Roquentin’s disintegrated and disordered life as a consequence of some given pathological condition or some given abnormality of imagination. Pathological condition cannot condition man’s freedom. Freedom means an environment to be changed. Well, in the light of Sartre’s philosophy Levy came close, significantly closer, but not there, because according to Sartre ‘‘Whatever man may now appear to be, there is a future to be fashioned, a virgin future that awaits him.’’<sup>16</sup> In fact, this is what causes nausea in Antoine Roquentin. In *Existentialism and Marxism*, Sartre says, ‘‘For the idea which I have never ceased to develop is that in the end one is always responsible for what is made of one. Even if one can do

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nothing else besides assume this responsibility. For I believe that a man can always make something out of what is made of him.”<sup>17</sup> Genet was rigorously conditioned to be a thief but eventually he made himself a poet. “It cannot be a happy freedom, in a case like this. Freedom is not a triumph. For Genet, it simply marked out certain routes which were not initially given.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, it is man who is free to choose to feel the world as nauseating or otherwise, as Sartre has identified freedom with existence. So, Roquentin’s hostile feeling and condition is due to the outcome of his own free choice, nausea is a choice of Roquentin himself in the world, which he has freely chosen. Whatever man’s actions may be, there is only he who has to decide. Nothing is given ready-made on a platter. However, Levy argues that Roquentin is unable to get his life together due to imagination fiasco which in my understanding is not the case according to Sartre. In fact, Roquentin’s condition is precisely due to the fact that Roquentin has freely chosen the project of leading a meaningless, disintegrated, disordered, chaotic, or worthless life and not due to some pathological factor which is attributed by Levy for Roquentin’s nausea. “There is no reality except in action... ‘Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is’.”<sup>19</sup>

Adversity and circumstances which man encounters in the world are not the reason to lead a meaningless life for man is free in a situation. Situation reveals man’s freedom. “Therefore the for-itself appears as the free foundation of its emotions as of its volitions. My fear *is* free and manifests my freedom; I have put all my freedom into my fear, and I have chosen myself as fearful in this or that circumstance. Under other circumstances I shall exist as deliberate and courageous, and I shall have put all my freedom into my courage. In relation to freedom there is no privileged psychic phenomenon. All my “modes of being” manifest freedom equally since they are all ways of being my own nothingness.”<sup>20</sup>

The Focus of Kierkegaard: The passionate and faithful individual

Well, here it would be appropriate to see what Johannes Climacus—Kierkegaard—has to say about human existence. “Existence constitutes the highest interest of existing individual, and his interest in his existence constitutes his reality. What reality is cannot be expressed in the language of abstraction.”<sup>21</sup> For Kierkegaard, the System, Objectivity, and abstraction were not important. It was the concrete, empirically existing individual which was of prime importance. The individual for the Dane was a concrete truth in the process of becoming. Abstract truth was the objectivity which was finished, “the correspondence between thought

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and being is, from the abstract point of view, always finished. Only with the concrete does becoming enter in, and it is from the concrete that abstract thought abstracts.”<sup>22</sup>

Subjectivity was the individual, existing, human being and this was the truth for Kierkegaard. Passion is something which exists, it exists in individual. The individual exists with passion. Abstraction and thought lacks passion. Passion was the individual’s ability to ‘become’, to move to a decision and not dilly-dally. The individual must decide, commit, choose, and act with cent per cent energy, vibrancy, vigour, devotion, and enthusiasm. Existence is a matter of immense action and not a matter of reflection and abstraction; it is a matter of thorough *performance*; it is a dynamic movement of life. In fact, “there is something which cannot be thought, namely, existence.”<sup>23</sup>

### Conclusion

Thus I have established that, no matter how long a person is in bad faith, he or she is of his or her own freedom, nevertheless, he or she can due to freedom which is the being of *pour-soi* can *no longer* be the person in *mauvaise foi*, he or she is or was. I would like to affirm by way of conclusion that meaninglessness of the world or of human existence is a matter of decision emanating from a person’s free choice to decide about the world either as meaningless or as meaningful. It is he or she who decides to feel the meaninglessness or insignificance of the world. The world, on the contrary, is simply there. The world does not condition or determine a person’s action or freedom. But he or she can condition the world, that is, he or she can change the environment, he or she can bring in some concrete change. He or she can *become*. Freedom implies an environment to be changed. Nothing in the world can amaze a person without the person determining himself to be amazed. Man is thrown into the world which is completely indifferent to him.

Readers have viewed existentialism from a solitary perspective, considering the world as vacuous or meaningless, giving the reason that in the absence of God, the world becomes meaningless. I think, it’s not fair interpretation of existentialism especially of Sartre. There is no link between the world appearing as meaningful and God’s existence; similarly there is no link between the world appearing as worthless and God’s non-existence. Irrespective of God’s existence or non-existence, the world appearing as meaningful or meaningless is purely a matter of individual choice and freedom, which I have already evinced. Meaningfulness is something which will emanate from the individual that is from his

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freedom; similarly meaninglessness is something which will emanate from his freedom that is from his free choice. Both are matters of the person's decision. It is the individual who decides to feel the world as either meaningless or significant. It is his decision which would erupt world's meaninglessness or meaningfulness. Since he is separated from the world by nothing except by his freedom, it is his freedom which manifests the world as meaningless or meaningful. There is no objective meaningfulness or meaninglessness as far as the world is concerned. The world and the person's existence become meaningful or meaningless depending on the way he chooses to see or feel the world, and his own existence or life. It is he who chooses to see the world as absurd. I have depicted that readers who have tried to establish a relation or link between the existence of God and the meaningfulness of the world have based themselves on the preconceived feeling that only God's existence can make the world and human life meaningful, which in fact does not comport with the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. They have eschewed an idea and insight of great depth running in the existential philosophy of Sartre that, freedom and being of man is one and there is no difference between the being of man and his being free. I have established that the value of the world and the value of a person's existence depend on his free choice to evaluate the world and his existence. A feeling of existential nausea is not given but it is freely chosen. Man is free to *live* in a way in which he freely chooses to *live*. Man has to decide. Thus, man is free to choose to live in bad faith and he is also free to choose to live in good faith. A life of good faith is a life of immense and continued action; man cannot putter over this task. Man can always and at any time try (action) to lead an authentic life (life in good faith ) irrespective of his past. Existence can only be grasped by my way of leading *life* and not by my way of thinking. Existence implies immense action and not thought. Each moment is free, fresh, and new moment; not connected with past moments. Each moment is free and fresh in itself and it is not determined or governed by past moments which are dead and gone. Past moments cannot influence the freshness and freedom of the new moments because the past moments are not associated with the present moment in any way. Man is a presence to these new, pure, fresh, and unsullied moments. Sullied past moments cannot contaminate the present moment which is free and fresh. Therefore, even the widely but unfavorably known gambler of Sartre can quit gambling no matter how strong or luring the temptation might be to gamble, on seeing the tempting gaming table. In fact, life must be *lived* to be really authentic. This is the beauty and magnificence of existentialist philosophy where the

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splendid and beautiful awakening and total renewal of self takes place. Finally, in a Godless world, a life of good faith is a *lived authentic experience*.

Foot notes

1. Sartre, Jean-Paul 1992. *Being and Nothingness : A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Translated and with an Introduction by Hazel E. Barnes, University of Colorado. New York: Washington Square Press. 567.
2. Ibid. 111.
3. Ibid. 111.
4. Ibid. 116.
5. Ibid. 569.
6. Ibid. 622.
7. Ibid. 574.
8. Ibid. 574.
9. Ibid. 592.
10. Ibid. 629.
11. Ibid. 650.
12. Ibid. 653.
13. Ibid. 711.
14. Ibid. 567.
15. Ibid. 651.
16. Ibid. 650.
17. Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1966. *Existentialism and Humanism*. Translation and Introduction by Philip Mairet. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. 35.
18. Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1974. *Between Existentialism and Marxism*. Translated by John Matthews. London : NLB. 34-35.
19. Ibid. 35.

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20. Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1966. *Existentialism and Humanism*. Translation and Introduction by Philip Mairet. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. 41

21. Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1992. *Being and Nothingness : A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Translated and with an Introduction by Hazel E. Barnes, University of Colorado. New York: Washington Square Press. 574

22. Kierkegaard, Soren. 1941. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Translated from the Danish by David F. Swenson. Completed after his death and provided with Introduction and Notes by Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press For American Scandinavian Foundation. 279.

23. Ibid. 170.

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