

# [What and escape the responsibility. sartre says](https://assignbuster.com/what-and-escape-the-responsibility-sartre-says/)

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What does Sartre mean by ‘ badfaith’? Sartre defines Bad Faith as a form of self-deception. It occurs when we deceiveourselves into thinking that a certain action is the only choice we have andthere is nothing else that can be done. We use the notion of ‘ I did not had anyother option’ as a means to justify actions and escape the responsibility. Sartre says that we always have options. Sartre uses the example of a waiter. Thewaiter thinks that he is just a waiter and takes his job as a waiter to be hisdestiny. Waiter thinks that he has no other choice than to be a waiter.

Sartresays that waiter is living in bad faith. According to Sartre we always have a choice. We are all free.

We are all free tochoose for ourselves and be who we want to be. Sartre’s ideathat we are free to choose is based on his claim that “ existence precedesessence”. For Sartre, humans first comes to existence and then creates anessence. Sartre thinks that human, though not free to choose whether to existor not, has the freedom to create his own essence.

For objects such as chair, penknife; essence comes before existence. These objects are created with apurpose. A chair is to sit.

A chair cannot be used where penknife is required; in other words the destiny of objects is already decided. What differentiates ushumans from objects is that we create our destiny. We can serve multiplepurposes and we have the freedom to choose these purposes. Suppose, I amwriting this essay assignment which I must submit before deadline to avoidpenalty. To avoid penalty I have no other choice but to submit before thedeadline.

If I agree with Sartre’s notion of bad faith then this situation creates deadlock in my mind. I see noother choice except to submit before the deadline. Sartre would argue that Ihave the choice to walk away from it all and no one but I myself have putmyself in this situation. No one forced me to take this course, I made thechoice to study this course. If I chose to study this course because I saw itas the only choice or because someone else told me to study it then I haveacted in bad faith. Sartre considers reason such as ‘ the only choice’ to bedeterministic. However Sartre is strongly indeterministic and rejects absolutemoral values.

“ Everyone can do what helikes, and will be incapable, from such a point of view, of condemning eitherthe point of view or the action of anyone else” (BN, p. 24). Sartre is making two claims here. First, everyone is free todo whatever they wish to. There is no preconceived notion of what we can do andwhat we cannot do. Second, because everyone can do as they please, one personcannot condemn the other person’s point of or action; my action is only for myselfand whatever I do, no other person is bound to do the same except out ofhis/her own will. Sartre is criticized for both of his claims. In his first claim, Sartre completely denies all form of ethicswhich involve determinism and prescriptivism.

Every individual at all timesmust act out of his own will rather than follow an absolute moral value or followa prescribed act from any authority. This brings strong criticism fromreligious point of view which accuses Sartre of replacing collective ethicswith individualistic ethics that ignore the solidarity of humankind. In thename of free existential choice, Sartre reinforces his version of ethics whichdenounces absolute moral values. Sartre’s version of ethics have no criteria todefine what is right. All that Sartre is preaching is that just don’t act inbad faith. So let’s suppose if Hitler in his war crimes act out of his own willand not under the pressure of anyone else then his actions are not from badfaith.

This can give a justification to every action. Therefore, Sartre’s ideaof bad faith does not give us a solid ground collective ethics. Every person isencouraged to have a subjective view which can create problems in the society. Onthis criticism, Sartre would argue that acting without bad faith would bringeveryone in the realm of responsibility. Sartre’s ethics rely on two pillars: Bad faith and freedom. Sartre thinks that when every person has the freedom toact without any absolute moral value then they will be completely responsiblefor their actions because there is not predefined criteria to limit theiroptions. To claim that we have determined choices is a form of self-deception. Hesays “ humans are condemned to be free” (BN).

We are free to make a choice andthis freedom is enforced upon us. We have freedom to choose in every action andour inaction at any moment is also a choice that we make. Sartre disagrees thatany action will escape with a justification.

Acting without bad faith, withcomplete freedom puts complete responsibility on us. Sartre is not against lawsthat are made by the government which are to provide rights to every person inthe society and to create order in the society. If there is a deadline createdfor the submission of the essay that is to ensure that results can released ontime. If upon breaking the red light on the road results in punishment then itis to ensure collective safety and this is necessary to maintain order andsecure the society.

Sartre says that if everyone would be free to act out oftheir own will then they cannot blame any other person or absolute moral value fortheir wrong doing. The complete responsibility for an action and also forinaction will be on the person. If I submit the essay late because my roommate wassick and I had to cook food and take care of him or any other reason that putsthe blame on others is void and I have to bear the consequences for it. Similarlyif I commit an action against the law, then I cannot escape from theconsequences as I have the complete freewill to act. Sartre sees bad faith as anatural outcome of human nature.

Having absolute moral values and courses ofaction prescribed by others are what Marxists call ‘ opium of the masses’. Wetry to escape and act in bad faith because as much as we want freedom we runaway from taking responsibility of our action and for our state of life. Thereforewe resort in bad faith to escape the responsibility that has been forced uponus. Even though Sartre believes that human beings have no essence other thanthe essence that they create for themselves, one part of human essence that toan extent can be considered fixed is freedom with facticity, as Sartre says “ Manis condemned to be free” (BN).

He says that all humans have the freedom to makea choice for themselves at all times. Understanding the facticity that we are bornat different places to different parents with different opportunities; we areforced to choose what we will become and choose course of action from whateveris given to us. “ We are left alone withoutexcuse” (BN, p. 34).

We cannot escape fromtaking responsibility for ourselves and we cannot blame others for our failure. With complete consciousness of being held responsible for action and inaction, we will make the right choice. Sartre seems to make good justification for his idea of bad faith. A person now knows that onlyhe is responsible for his actions and cannot put the blame of his action’sconsequence on other people. Even though freedom is endorsed in Sartre’s idea, itdoes not help in any way to make the right choice in terms of morality.

It seemsas if Sartre is trying hard to convince a thinking man to become a man ofaction. There is an aspect of rebelliousness and anarchy in Sartre’s ideabecause Sartre is endorsing freedom and consequences of free choice to act asbasis for morality. If we consider the criminal actions, these can be justifiedon Sartre’s basis for morality. A person may think that whatever he chooses todo is the right thing as long as he is aware that he has the choice not to doit and the consequences are his own responsibility. Therefore he can go andcommit crimes thinking that he knows that he has a choice and this is what hewants to do. This subjective ethical view of our everyday actions is the startof chaos. Let’s consider the orders of an authority. Authority orders to do ‘ actionA’.

If I choose to do ‘ action A’ because I think that ‘ action A’ is my only choicethen it is bad faith. If I understand that I have the choice to not do ‘ actionA’ and still do ‘ action A’ then I am not in bad faith. But ‘ action A’ can bekilling a person and the person can think that he is right because he has actedwithout bad faith. Sartre may counter argue that the person is takingresponsibility so he can be accountable for it. But important concern here isthat the person may consider himself right and justified because he exercisedhis freedom to act and he is not in bad faith.

Sartre is focused on theconsequence of actions. He has no concern with what is the right cause in ouractions. All that Sartre is concerned with is the awareness of having thefreedom to act at all times. Sartre realizes this criticism and accepts it as amistake in his idea. That is why he tries to make up for it by using a conceptwhich is related to ethical approach of Immanuel Kant’s concept of categoricalimperative. “ When a man commitshimself to anything, fully realising that he is not only choosing what he willbe, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole ofmankind – in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete andprofound responsibility.” (BN, P30). Sartreis trying to say that if a person chooses to do ‘ action A’ then regardless ofwhat this ‘ action A’ is, I am not only committing myself but rather I amcreating an example for all humans to do ‘ action A’.

This is somewhat similarto Immanuel Kant’s Categorical imperative which states “ Act only on that maximwhereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (P. M. S. P41).

Kant argues that if something is morally right for one person to do thenit must be morally right for anyone in similar circumstances. Sartre is alsoimplying the same tactic here. “ If, moreover, existence precedes essence and we will to exist at thesame time as we fashion our image, that image is valid for all and for theentire epoch in which we find ourselves. Our responsibility is thus muchgreater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole” (EH).

Sartre is trying to shift from a completely individualisticapproach to freedom towards an approach which concerns all mankind of an era. Sartre initially stated that because for humans’ existence precedes essencetherefore every human is free to act and create their own essence. I am free tochoose whatever I feel like doing because at the end only I am responsible formy action. Sartre states “” I amthus responsible for myself and for all men, and I am creating a certain imageof man as I would have him to be. In fashioning myself I fashion man. (EH).” Sartre is contradicting his own statement of on freedom ofchoice and responsibility on oneself. Whatever choice I make for myself, whatever essence I try to create for myself; if other people follow my path andmake the choices that I made then I have the responsibility of their choice aswell.

I initiated them on making this choice. This can lead to the conclusionthat Sartre is contradicting his own ideas and we do not have as much freedom asSartre is trying to make us believe and therefore one man is responsible forhimself and others as well for acting without bad faith. Sartre on thiscontradiction does not give a counter argument but rather agrees that this greaterresponsibility is an unavoidable aspect of human condition. “ Everyone can do what he likes, and will beincapable, from such a point of view, of condemning either the point of view orthe action of anyone else. (EH)”.

IfI am doing ‘ action A’ without bad faith then I cannot condemn any other personwho does ‘ action A’ as well precisely because I myself am committing myself to ‘ actionA’. Similar to Sartre’s declaration that “ man is condemned to be free”(), this extendedresponsibility is inflexible consequence of such declaration. Sartre believes that very few humans are willing to accept theirabundant freedom and be responsible for it. When humans realize the totalfreedom and responsibility and that when they choose for themselves they arechoosing for others as well, this creates ‘ anguish’ in them. There is no oneelse or any absolute authority to take blame and humans have to create theirown moral code, this then makes humans experience ‘ abandonment’. With ‘ anguish’and ‘ abandonment’ humans fall into despair.

They find no excuses for evading theirown freedom. They try to seek refuge in absolute moral values and are willingto follow others, so that they can escape responsibility by putting blame oftheir circumstances onto something or someone else. When humans try to evadetheir freedom and look for another source of moral code rather than creating amoral code for themselves that is when humans act in bad faith.                      Bibliography Sartre, J. P. (1969). Being and Nothingness. London: Routledge .

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