

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 deceive ourselves into thinking that a certain action is the only choice we have and there is nothing else that can be done. We use the notion of 'I did not have any other 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. The waiter thinks that he is just a waiter and takes his job as a waiter to be his destiny. Waiter thinks that he has no other choice than to be a waiter.

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

We are all free to choose for ourselves and be who we want to be. Sartre's idea that we are free to choose is based on his claim that "existence precedes essence". For Sartre, humans first come to existence and then create an essence. Sartre thinks that human, though not free to choose whether to exist or not, has the freedom to create his own essence.

For objects such as chair, penknife; essence comes before existence. These objects are created with a purpose. 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 us humans from objects is that we create our destiny. We can serve multiple purposes and we have the freedom to choose these purposes. Suppose, I am writing this essay assignment which I must submit before deadline to avoid penalty. To avoid penalty I have no other choice but to submit before the deadline.

If I agree with Sartre's notion of bad faith then this situation creates deadlock in my mind. I see no other choice except to submit before the deadline.

Sartre would argue that I have the choice to walk away from it all and no one but I myself have put myself in this situation. No one forced me to take this course, I made the choice to study this course. If I chose to study this course because I saw it as the only choice or because someone else told me to study it then I have acted in bad faith. Sartre considers reason such as 'the only choice' to be deterministic. However Sartre is strongly indeterministic and rejects absolute moral values.

"Everyone can do what he likes, and will be incapable, from such a point of view, of condemning either the point of view or the action of anyone else" (BN, p. 24). Sartre is making two claims here. First, everyone is free to do whatever they wish to. There is no preconceived notion of what we can do and what we cannot do. Second, because everyone can do as they please, one person cannot condemn the other person's point of view or action; my action is only for myself and whatever I do, no other person is bound to do the same except out of his/her own will. Sartre is criticized for both of his claims. In his first claim, Sartre completely denies all forms of ethics which involve determinism and prescriptivism.

Every individual at all times must act out of his own will rather than follow an absolute moral value or follow a prescribed act from any authority. This brings strong criticism from a religious point of view which accuses Sartre of replacing collective ethics with individualistic ethics that ignore the solidarity of humankind. In the name of free existential choice, Sartre reinforces his

version of ethics which denounces absolute moral values. Sartre's version of ethics have no criteria to define what is right. All that Sartre is preaching is that just don't act in bad faith. So let's suppose if Hitler in his war crimes act out of his own will and not under the pressure of anyone else then his actions are not from bad faith.

This can give a justification to every action. Therefore, Sartre's idea of bad faith does not give us a solid ground collective ethics. Every person is encouraged to have a subjective view which can create problems in the society. On this criticism, Sartre would argue that acting without bad faith would bring everyone 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 to act without any absolute moral value then they will be completely responsible for their actions because there is not predefined criteria to limit their options. To claim that we have determined choices is a form of self-deception. He says " humans are condemned to be free" (BN).

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

Acting without bad faith, with complete freedom puts complete responsibility on us. Sartre is not against laws that are made by the government which are to provide rights to every person in the society and to create order in the society. If there is a deadline created for the submission of the essay that is to ensure that results can be released on time. If upon breaking the red light on

the road results in punishment then it is to ensure collective safety and this is necessary to maintain order and secure the society.

Sartre says that if everyone would be free to act out of their own will then they cannot blame any other person or absolute moral value for their wrongdoing. The complete responsibility for an action and also for inaction will be on the person. If I submit the essay late because my roommate was sick and I had to cook food and take care of him or any other reason that puts the blame on others is void and I have to bear the consequences for it. Similarly if I commit an action against the law, then I cannot escape from the consequences as I have the complete free will to act. Sartre sees bad faith as a natural outcome of human nature.

Having absolute moral values and courses of action prescribed by others are what Marxists call 'opium of the masses'. We try to escape and act in bad faith because as much as we want freedom we run away from taking responsibility of our action and for our state of life. Therefore we resort in bad faith to escape the responsibility that has been forced upon us. Even though Sartre believes that human beings have no essence other than the essence that they create for themselves, one part of human essence that to an extent can be considered fixed is freedom with facticity, as Sartre says "Man is condemned to be free" (BN).

He says that all humans have the freedom to make a choice for themselves at all times. Understanding the facticity that we are born at different places to different parents with different opportunities; we are forced to choose what

we will become and choose course of action from whatever is given to us. "We are left alone without excuse" (BN, p. 34).

We cannot escape from taking 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 only he is responsible for his actions and cannot put the blame of his action's consequence on other people. Even though freedom is endorsed in Sartre's idea, it does not help in any way to make the right choice in terms of morality.

It seems as if Sartre is trying hard to convince a thinking man to become a man of action. There is an aspect of rebelliousness and anarchy in Sartre's idea because Sartre is endorsing freedom and consequences of free choice to act as a basis for morality. If we consider the criminal actions, these can be justified on Sartre's basis for morality. A person may think that whatever he chooses to do is the right thing as long as he is aware that he has the choice not to do it and the consequences are his own responsibility. Therefore he can go and commit crimes thinking that he knows that he has a choice and this is what he wants to do. This subjective ethical view of our everyday actions is the start of chaos. Let's consider the orders of an authority. Authority orders to do 'action A'.

If I choose to do 'action A' because I think that 'action A' is my only choice then it is bad faith. If I understand that I have the choice to not do 'action A' and still do 'action A' then I am not in bad faith. But 'action A' can

by killing a person and the person can think that he is right because he has acted without bad faith. Sartre may counter argue that the person is taking responsibility so he can be accountable for it. But important concern here is that the person may consider himself right and justified because he exercised his freedom to act and he is not in bad faith.

Sartre is focused on the consequence of actions. He has no concern with what is the right cause in our actions. All that Sartre is concerned with is the awareness of having the freedom to act at all times. Sartre realizes this criticism and accepts it as a mistake in his idea. That is why he tries to make up for it by using a concept which is related to ethical approach of Immanuel Kant's concept of categorical imperative. "When a man commits himself to anything, fully realising that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind - in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility." (BN, P30). Sartre is trying to say that if a person chooses to do 'action A' then regardless of what this 'action A' is, I am not only committing myself but rather I am creating an example for all humans to do 'action A'.

This is somewhat similar to Immanuel Kant's Categorical imperative which states "Act only on that maxim whereby 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 then it must be morally right for anyone in similar circumstances. Sartre is also implying the same tactic here. "If, moreover, existence precedes

essence and we will to exist at the same time as we fashion our image, that image is valid for all and for the entire epoch in which we find ourselves. Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole" (EH).

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

I initiated them on making this choice. This can lead to the conclusion that Sartre is contradicting his own ideas and we do not have as much freedom as Sartre is trying to make us believe and therefore one man is responsible for himself and others as well for acting without bad faith. Sartre on this contradiction does not give a counter argument but rather agrees that this greater responsibility is an unavoidable aspect of human condition. "Everyone can do what he likes, and will be incapable, from such a point of

view, of condemning either the point of view or the action of anyone else. (EH)".

If I am doing 'action A' without bad faith then I cannot condemn any other person who does 'action A' as well precisely because I myself am committing myself to 'action A'. Similar to Sartre's declaration that "man is condemned to be free"(), this extended responsibility is an inflexible consequence of such declaration. Sartre believes that very few humans are willing to accept their abundant freedom and be responsible for it. When humans realize the total freedom and responsibility and that when they choose for themselves they are choosing for others as well, this creates 'anguish' in them. There is no one else or any absolute authority to take blame and humans have to create their own moral code, this then makes humans experience 'abandonment'. With 'anguish' and 'abandonment' humans fall into despair.

They find no excuses for evading their own freedom. They try to seek refuge in absolute moral values and are willing to follow others, so that they can escape responsibility by putting blame on their circumstances onto something or someone else. When humans try to evade their freedom and look for another source of moral code rather than creating a moral code for themselves that is when humans act in bad faith.

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