

The presentation of self in everyday

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In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman compares life to acting. He argues that “when the individual is in the immediate presence of others, his activity will have a promissory character” (Goffman 2). I think it is ironic because I always thought that movies or theaters have always tried to imitate reality and not the other way around. In order to clearly show his analogy, Goffman presents elements of acting such as the front. We are all familiar with the term front act.

” In Goffman’s opinion, people are all playing an act. This is such a bold claim to make because he is saying that we are all just performing and not being our real selves, though there are some truths to his claim. What is confusing is when do we really act, or when do we be ourselves? Most of us would not acknowledge his belief that we are playing a character, but then again, the person that denies this may also just be playing a role, and so the question remains unanswered.

One idea of Goffman that caught my attention is his theory that people cooperate in an act to cover, say, something embarrassing. I have experienced it myself—I would pretend that I have not witnessed someone undergo an embarrassing moment, although unconsciously, I was not trying to make that person feel the embarrassment more, but rather, I was just trying not to be mean.

It did not occur to me that by pretending (and therefore joining in the scene, or rather excluding myself from the scene) not to see the embarrassing act, I have helped in saving that person’s face. What follows is an array of lectures, as it were, like that of a professor teaching a theater or film student, only that his lectures are philosophical and are related to our

everyday lives. After reading Goffman's work, I found myself smiling because of the truths in his analogies that never crossed my mind before.