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Altruism and Bad Faith: How the Hero Lies

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Abstract

Table of Contents

0. Introduction	2
0.1 Acknowledgements	2
0.2 Sartre	2
0.3 Choice of Sartre’s Works	3
0.4 Method of Study	5
0.5 Summary of Chapters	6
1. Sartre’s Bad Faith	6
1.1 Existentialism and Bad Faith	6
1.2 Patterns of Bad Faith	9
2. Altruism	11
2.1 Altruism as Phenomenon	11
2.2 Conditions of Genuine Altruism	12
2.3 Altruism in Bad Faith	12
3. Les Mouches	13
3.1 The Story	13
3.2 Action-for-Others as Theme in Les Mouches	14
3.3 Orestes’ Being-for-Others & Bad Faith	14
3.4 Electra’s Being-for-Others & Bad Faith	16
3.5 Conclusion: Les Mouches	17
4. Les Jeux Sont Faits	18
4.1 The Story	18
4.2 Action-for-Others as Theme in Les Jeux Sont Faits	19
4.3 Pierre’s Being-for-Others & Bad Faith	19
4.4 Eve’s Being-for-Others & Bad Faith	21
4.5 Conclusion: Les Jeux Sont Faits	22
5. Final Thoughts	23
Works Cited	24

0. INTRODUCTION

0.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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0.2 SARTRE

We begin with a brief overview of Jean-Paul Sartre, an intellectual phenomenon born the twenty-first of June, 1905. As a novelist, playwright, literary critic, journalist, and perhaps above all, philosopher, his works continue to hold influence, certainly in academia.

By the time of *Being and Nothingness*, written and published during the Second World War, he considered himself a phenomenologist, as he aimed to study the human consciousness. And due to the success of his work, he is still considered a principal mover of Existentialism, the philosophical theory that emphasizes the importance of the individual, who is both free in choice and responsible for determining his own existence.

One of Sartre's most recognizable contributions to the existentialist movement, *mauvaise foi*, or "bad faith," seeks to explain the process by which humans attempt to deny their own freedom and avoid responsibility for choice. Bad faith is a form of deception, a lie one tells to oneself; in deception, one tries to constitute oneself as what one is not (Sartre 67). And one form of deception is to assume the guise of selflessness. But when one assumes the external appearance of being selfless with a knowing disconnect to one's own values, one may find oneself in bad faith insofar as one limits his or her innate freedom and rejects the self.

And this facet of the existentialist philosophy is elsewhere no more apparent than in Sartre's own works, whose characters often find themselves to be in bad faith. This study, through an analysis of two such works from 1943, aims to understand and elucidate a possible connection between bad faith and altruism.

We shall also attempt to make a case for the existence of genuine altruism through an analysis the texts with supplementation from established empirical data. If there are conditions for altruism afflicted by bad faith, which Sartre has described in his works, then there may also be the proper conditions for genuine altruism.

0.3 CHOICE OF SARTRE'S WORKS

We shall study, with supplementation from *Being and Nothingness*, two of Sartre's works written or published in 1943. Insofar as we are concerned with our condition, with ourselves, and ourselves as we relate to others, these works are significant.

The first of these works is Sartre's 1943 play, *Les Mouches* (English: "The Flies"), a modern adaptation of the post-Homeric Electra myth (borrowed chiefly from the second part of Aeschylus' trilogy, the *Oresteia*), in which Orestes and his sister Electra avenge the death of their father, King Agamemnon, by killing Queen Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus, who had killed him fifteen years prior. Sartre's version differs from those of playwrights Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, as he incorporates his existentialist philosophy, posing questions of freedom and choice. Of greatest interest, however, is that the protagonists commit an altruistic crime in the name of devotion to others; thus, we concern ourselves with this work as the situation can elucidate the reasoning behind both bad faith altruism and genuine altruism.

But let us also consider the background of *Les Mouches*, and the extent to which Sartre had intended it to be an allegorical memorandum on human freedom. As the play -- one of

Sartre's early forays into theatre -- was written and premiered during the Nazi Occupation of France, it is important to consider the audience of the time, which had no association with the later, more Marxist Sartre widely recognized today. As Stoekl notes, the play is "a polyvalent work that could be read in different ways by different groups" (80). Therefore, we understand that it is quite simple to subvert the subversive. Sartre's affirmation of individual freedom was applicable to many in the 1943 audience; some could have judged Orestes' violent vengeance as a case for the necessity of resistance, while others could have viewed it as sympathetic to the strong-rule-the-weak tenets of Nazism (Ryder, 80).

The second work is Sartre's screenplay, *Les Jeux Sont Faits*, published in 1947 after the Second World War. But according to Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Delannoy (director of the film of the same name), Sartre had completed it close to the end of 1943, the same year he produced *Being and Nothingness* (Contat and Rybalka, 29, 486). It is an original story of two souls, Pierre Dumaine and Eve Charlier, predestined to be together in love and contentment, until premature deaths deprive them of the chance. These two characters must then prove within twenty four hours both that they love each other and deserve to live, but fail because they spend much of their allotted time on efforts to help others. This story demonstrates the dangers of a fixation with others; thus, we concern ourselves with this work as it provides the foundation for an analysis of the conditions of altruism, both genuine and under the influence of bad faith.

But whereas *Les Mouches* has classical mythology, and therefore, by extension, veiled social commentary to fall back on, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* gives a much more obvious representation of France suffering beneath the boot of the German powers during the Occupation. This likely affected the screenplay's publication; the consequent timing might explain the lack of popularity or proper discourse regarding the screenplay. Consider also that

the screenplay exhibits a more deterministic and melodramatic quality than his other works, such as the celebrated *Huis Clos*, and is seldom mentioned today, even by critics (Storer v). In addition, the English translation of the text (“The Chips are Down,” translated by Louise Varèse and published in 1948) remains widely out of print.

0.4 METHOD OF STUDY

In the development of this analysis, which melds elements of Sartre’s own philosophy with a recognizable moral phenomenon, a combination of methods becomes preferable.

The thematic structural method will allow us to construct a foundation by which we shall examine Sartre’s works. And in turn, this study becomes of the critical, interrogative nature. Is not the purpose of humanities-oriented work to question, to reveal previously unknown or unconsidered aspects of a labor through the proper discourse?

Furthermore, a qualitative approach based on established empirical research will permit this melding of subject matter. Thus the study also takes on a dual quality of analysis and contention, as we shall, when necessary, resort to the aforementioned research in order to seize a better comprehension of a certain concept or assertion. In this respect, it is also preferable to search for and accept the possibility of common areas of interest.

Prior work (not necessarily related) has drawn connections between literature and moral philosophy. In particular, an article by Andrew Inkpin has attempted to answer the question of whether or not literature retains value in philosophical studies, in the end concluding that literature is important -- even in the case of Sartre’s fiction -- insofar as it remains plausible on the basis of our familiarity with the real world (18). Therefore, even the mythological *Les Mouches* and the fantastic *Les Jeux Sont Faits* have merit, as their characters behave within the realm of human plausibility.

Where this study differs from prior work, however, is that studies involving Sartre's notion of bad faith, specifically, have not yet attempted to elucidate any possible connection to altruism. Therefore, the purpose of this study is two-fold: to explore any semblance of this connection, and to give further merit to Sartre's works as significant sources of philosophical and moral scholarship.

0.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

This study shall comprise five central chapters. In the first, we shall explain all relevant terminology concerning Sartre's existentialist philosophy, particular those terms that relate to the stratagems of bad faith. In the second, we shall examine altruism, both as a moral phenomenon and as it relates to bad faith. The third and fourth chapters will attempt to identify in *Les Mouches* and *Les Jeux Sont Faits*, respectively, the points at which action-for-others demonstrates as theme the dangers of dramatic altruism. And finally, the fifth chapter will present any concluding thoughts and recommend possible directions for future studies in human motivation.

1. SARTRE'S BAD FAITH

1.1 EXISTENTIALISM AND BAD FAITH

Existentialism. The term lends its origins to another French philosopher known during Sartre's time, Gabriel Marcel (Daigle 5). Although Sartre initially rejected the label, he went on to defend it during a lecture at the Club Maintenant in Paris, aptly titled *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (English: "Existentialism is a Humanism"), noting that the term (and therefore, by extension, Sartre) had gained some infamy as indicative of a pessimist doctrine. But Sartre rebuffed several of the charges levied against his philosophy, even calling it optimistic (Éditions Nagel 1946).

And in the sense that Existentialism espouses man's individuality, champions his ability to choose and create as he deems possible, it is, at the very least, a reassuring philosophy. Because at the time, in his philosophical essays, most notably his 1943 *L'Être et le Néant* ("Being and Nothingness") Sartre had not fabricated, suggested, or deemed possible anything that man could not already accomplish.

It is also in this phenomenological essay, *Being and Nothingness*, this most principal of his texts, that Sartre asserts each person is free to determine his or her own purpose in life. He uses Hegel's terminology to distinguish between being-in-itself and being-for-itself; the former refers to inanimate objects, while the latter refers to human beings -- that is to say, the presence of consciousness distinguishes and defines a human.

But Sartre also elucidates the notion of being-for-others. The presence of another consciousness, for Sartre, acts as mediator between the internal and external self, which is to say that the self is always aware of how it appears to the Other (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 221). By the mere presence of others, one is put into the position of judging oneself.

Bad faith comes into play, then, when one tells a lie in order to control perception of the self. In a lie to oneself and for oneself, one seeks either to conceal a displeasing truth or to present a pleasing untruth as truth. There is also the malicious lie to another, in which one either conceals a pleasing truth or presents a displeasing untruth as truth. That is to say, one attempts to direct falsehood outward toward others. But as Sartre holds, the prime indication of bad faith is direction of such a denial inward toward the self (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 48). Therefore, the purpose of bad faith is self-deception, which, as with any lie, is accomplished through falsehood.

However, Bad Faith differs from traditional falsehood in that the self is at once the deceiver and the deceived (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 49). This elimination of the external “other” means that one is not obliged to speak words so as to convince the self that something is either true or false -- such denial can occur even in passing thought. The inward direction of denial would seem to terminate the duality present in traditional falsehood, but in the sense that an internal other replaces the external other in the falsehood equation, bad faith implies the unity of a single consciousness, since both components of the aforementioned duality now work in tandem to maintain the effectiveness of a lie (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 49). This is not to say that the for-itself eliminates the external other, but rather that the for-itself relegates this other to a position of lesser priority. One can lie to another person and still be in bad faith about oneself, though in that case the internal other becomes the victim of that lie.

Let us consider how self-deception could be a form of faith. Take Sartre’s example of a man eager to work as a waiter in a café: his movements are “a little too precise,” and his eyes “express an interest a little too solicitous,” even when it comes to the trivial task of taking orders, such that Sartre believes this man is “playing at being a waiter” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 59). The waiter amuses himself by toying with his occupation, playing with the perceptions that people come to conceive of him. He convinces not only others, but also himself that he is not meant to be anything other than a waiter. He serves others for himself, yet he works to limit himself. This is bad faith.

The obsequious waiter convinces himself that any other career path is out of the question; thus it also becomes clear that this waiter does not mean to conceal a displeasing truth -- at least in the sense that it is not displeasing to open oneself up to greater career opportunities and their respective benefits. Rather, he presents a pleasing untruth to himself as truth: that he cannot be

anything other than a waiter. This man “[amuses] himself” in his occupation, because the notion that he has realized his solitary purpose in life is convenient and pleasing to him (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 59). He acts in bad faith because his internal self and internal other work together to present a pleasing untruth as truth. He lies *to* himself and *for* himself. The man cannot (and does not) know for certain whether or not his purpose is to be a waiter, yet he convinces himself that he can (and does) know this as truth.

But Sartre does not restrict bad faith to those who lose themselves in occupational roles. As we have posited, bad faith can occur in many ways, courtesy of falsehood. We have discussed reasons for bad faith, and now we move to the methods by which a person can find himself with the bad faith affliction.

1.2 PATTERNS OF BAD FAITH

As Sartre asserts, humans exist as associations of Facticity and Transcendence; he holds that these two properties of human existence “are and ought to be capable of a valid coordination... but bad faith does not wish... to coordinate them... Bad Faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 59). Thus, we can now consider how bad faith extends beyond the traditional falsehood of the for-itself. For this, we explore how a lack of coordination between Facticity and Transcendence causes bad faith.

Facticity refers to the concrete realities of life. One’s date of birth and previous choices qualify because they are unchangeable. Sartre recognizes that both “Facticity” and “Past” are suitable terms to indicate the necessity of fact, “not by virtue of necessity but by virtue of fact” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 118). Thus we can take Facticity to represent the past.

Transcendence refers to the conceivable possibilities of life. One's forthcoming choices and consequences qualify because they can change when one encounters them in the present. As a determiner of "the being of [consciousness]," Transcendence refers to one's ability to surpass one's facticity (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 180). Thus we can take Transcendence to represent the future.

And it is possible to apply the characteristics of either property to the other. This, however, keeps the two in disharmony. To affirm one and deny the other causes the imbalance characteristic of bad faith, even in the case of dramatic altruism. Thus, we can already see two possible patterns of self-deception.

The first pattern of bad faith entails both the denial of Transcendence and the affirmation of Facticity. Sartre's waiter is a prime example of this. We have established that the waiter is in bad faith because he lies to himself and for himself, that his lie works in the name of convenience. He means to present a pleasing untruth as truth, which is to say that he means to present a possibility as a concrete reality; in other words, the waiter denies his Transcendence because he presents it as a Facticity. The waiter concerns himself chiefly with his past choices.

The second pattern of bad faith entails both the denial of Facticity and the affirmation of Transcendence. The purpose of this lie to oneself and for oneself is to present a displeasing truth as untruth, to present a concrete reality as a possibility. This diminishes the significance of one's reality. People can deny Facticity when they present it as a Transcendence; in that case, the project of the for-itself becomes an escape from the past.

Take, for instance, a hopeful man who aspires to become president and has thus far dedicated his life to this pursuit. We shall say that this man does not belong to a family of high status, nor does he possess a substantial amount of money or make this known in his campaigns.

This man clings to possibility and denies the societal significance of his own givens, which is to say that he devalues his reality. Even if this man fails in his pursuit, he prefers to dismiss his failure as a mistake of the past, which holds no significance on future attempts to become president. As one who affirms possibility and ignores givens, a man such as this one believes himself to have “escaped from each mistake as soon as he has posited it and recognized it,” and, despite failure, “needs this perpetual rebirth, this constant escape in order to live” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 64). Such a man lies to himself and for himself, so we can designate his obsessive faith in possibility, in his own Transcendence, as bad faith.

Now that we have discussed the patterns of bad faith, we can begin to examine how even those who engage in altruism can maintain an affliction of bad faith. Altruists can fit the mold under the right -- or perhaps, wrong -- conditions, because to engage in being-for-others is to submit oneself to judgment, from both the other and the self.

2. ALTRUISM

2.1 ALTRUISM AS PHENOMENON

Altruism is a group phenomenon, in which one pays a cost and another receives a benefit (Darlington 385). In this case, it is reasonable to say that altruism depends a great deal on identification with the group -- on the being-for-others that leads to judgment of the self. And if this is true, then it would explain why altruism is often explained away as ultimately egoistic and pursued chiefly out of self-interest (Schwartz 321). Why put oneself at risk to assist another in a group setting?

We recall a study that attempted to determine such likelihood through an analysis of bystander intervention and bystander apathy, with a focus on “dramatic altruists,” people who put themselves in great danger to assist others. The study found that the probability of

intervention decreases as the number of people who might intervene increases, as the physical proximity of the victim decreases, and as the anonymity of the observers increases; therefore, the results suggested that any explanation for inaction could lie in the bystander's reaction to others present than in the bystander's indifference to the victim (Darley and Latane, 377-383).

2.2 CONDITIONS OF GENUINE ALTRUISM

What might we say, then, of the variables that influence the occurrence of altruism?

Hoffman has noted that genuine altruism appears to comprise two components: perspective taking and empathy (607-622). The absence of either one undermines altruism's authenticity; as Schwartz understands, without empathy one might use perspective to serve the frequently asserted "selfish" pursuits, while without perspective one might, out of empathy, act irrationally or inappropriately (322). So genuine altruism would seem to have two requirements: an understanding of someone else's experience, and the desire to do something about it.

2.3 ALTRUISM IN BAD FAITH

But how does one ensure that this act shall not be in bad faith? As Schwartz notes, most research on altruistic behavior demonstrates that a key ingredient to genuine altruism is positive self-esteem, though exceptions follow: "People with an extremely high opinion of themselves may feel no need to be connected to others, and people with a low opinion of themselves may be helpful just to garner social approval" (320). We shall contend that the range of proper self-esteem necessary is something of a goldilocks zone, that for the truest altruism to occur, unfettered by bad faith, the proper amount of self-esteem is also crucial. For this, we examine the presence of self-esteem as it relates to Sartre's protagonists and their dramatic altruism. Too much or little self-esteem could mean interference by bad faith, which, as we recall, is more often than not a ploy to avoid responsibility for choice. Thus we delve into two of Sartre's

works, whose protagonists engage in being-for-others, with dynamic levels of self-esteem, and varying degrees of success in achieving genuine altruism.

3. LES MOUCHES

3.1 THE STORY

In the first act of the play, Orestes arrives in the city of Argos, where the people live ceaselessly burdened by a blistering sun and swarms of flies, in constant remorse after having done nothing to prevent the murder of their old king fifteen years prior. He meets his sister, Electra, who wants nothing more than to put an end to the overwhelming atmosphere of guilt. Others advise Orestes to leave at once, in the hopes that he will not interfere with the delicate balance of the city.

In the second act of the play, Orestes learns that he has chosen to arrive during the time of the Ceremony of the Dead, which shall allow dead souls to enter the city for a day and torture the living citizens of Argos, force them to repent for their sins. Electra almost manages to convince the people that living happily would please the dead more than living remorsefully -- that is until the god Jupiter intervenes, and causes everyone to live in fear once more. Having failed, and in her desperation for vengeance, Electra recruits Orestes and gets him to kill the current king and queen.

In the third act of the play, Orestes and Electra flee while the furies (goddesses of remorse) begin to harass them for their criminal collusion. Electra shamefully tries to avoid any guilt, reasoning that she was not actually the one to commit the murders. Orestes, with confidence, refuses to accept guilt for the murders, believing he was right to free the people of Argos. Jupiter reappears, promising the two salvation if they repent. Electra gives in, while Orestes refutes the god's will. Orestes insists that one is not determined by one's past, and is

always free to choose one's own values. Consequently, he tells the people of Argos that he shall take all their flies and sins upon himself. He leaves them to conduct their affairs in peace, to create new lives in freedom and without remorse.

3.2 ACTION-FOR-OTHERS AS THEME IN LES MOUCHES

Orestes and Electra are both dramatic altruists because they want to free the people of Argos, and are willing to become outcasts by way of heinous crime in order to accomplish this goal. Also important is the condition of self-esteem for genuine altruism, which the play brings to the foreground via the god Jupiter's revelation about the nature of humanity: "Man is free... The moment he realizes it, the gods are powerless against him" (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 200, 203). Therefore, even Sartre affirms that a certain degree of self-esteem is preferable when one wishes not to act in bad faith.

3.3 ORESTES' BEING-FOR-OTHERS & BAD FAITH

Whereas in Aeschylus' rendition of the myth, Orestes arrives in Argos prepared specifically to avenge his father and usurp the throne, Sartre's Orestes is without a connection to the city, without a true commitment. In Act I, he arrives looking to assuage this lack of an identity by any means possible: "But if there were only something I could do, something to grant me a place among the people here; if only I could, even by a criminal act... fill this emptiness in my heart..." (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 126). The events that led to his absence, then, we can take to be part of his Facticity. Orestes cannot change the fact that his father was murdered; he can, however, choose to interpret this event as he wishes, and ascribe meaning to it. He wants to act, but he's not sure how. Thus far, he has decided not to let his Facticity weight him down.

In Act II, however, Orestes undergoes a transformation as he realizes just how free he is. But this is also where he begins to act in bad faith, for when confronted with the dilemma of

whether or not to help Electra in her quest for vengeance, Orestes receives a warning from Jupiter to leave the city. But Orestes suddenly realizes he can do whatever he wants (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 179). In a bout of contrarianism, he acts in bad faith when he refuses to heed Jupiter's warning, as he begins to have grand delusions of adhering to the "destiny" of his family (the house Atreus has a bloody history, of which Electra had duly reminded him), and of following through with a violent vengeance. He reiterates that he wants a place among the people of Argos, even referring to vengeance as the "only chance" he has to fill his void of identity (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 176-177). Here, he refers to vengeance as "his way," even though it was Electra who had suggested it in the first place (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 180). And since he had initially tried to convince Electra that vengeance was not of the utmost importance, he compounds his bad faith with negligence to what he had earlier claimed (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 170). In his quest to assert identity, he shows disregard for part of his Facticity, and therefore an adherence to the second pattern of bad faith.

But in Act III, we see another change in Orestes as he manages to absolve himself of his bad faith. When his dramatic altruism in bad faith -- his vengeance -- is over, Orestes sets out to ensure that the people of Argos shall remain free, thus he also turns to genuine altruism. And when he confronts Jupiter, he insists that he has realized his freedom, and refuses to accept any remorse for what he has done, believing it to have been the right thing to do; this is true of many dramatic altruists, who often report having done "what anyone would do" (Schwartz 317). And in the end, Orestes' desire to free the people of Argos has become genuine. He expresses empathy and understanding of their situation, having felt lost without identity, without freedom. He also exhibits a proper degree of self-esteem; he refuses the throne of Argos (Jupiter offered it

to him in return for remorse, for low self-esteem), and is not sure where the path he creates for himself will lead, but plans to value his freedom anyway (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 241).

3.4 ELECTRA'S BEING-FOR-OTHERS & BAD FAITH

When we meet Electra in Act I, she seems to have taken greater steps toward authenticity than has Orestes. She has seethed and toiled away for fifteen years under the current king and queen of Argos, in the shadow of their collusion. Thus, she has chosen to live by a desire for vengeance: "A wise man can expect nothing better from life than the chance to pay back all the wrong that has been done to him" (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 170). She has chosen her system of values, and claims herself willing to live by it, but she's in bad faith insofar as she has yet to act on this desire for vengeance. And she, no doubt, has had several opportunities to enact this vengeance on the king and queen, yet she has bided her time waiting for Orestes to happen along so she can sow the idea in his mind and make him act on her behalf.

As we see in Act II, Electra adheres to the first pattern of bad faith with her relentless affirmation of Facticity. She bows to her past, to her family history (of murder), to the supposed bad blood running rampant through her veins. She perverts this Facticity in order to justify her vengeance, believing that it is "impossible to escape such destiny" (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 172). In this sense, Electra's goal is functionally equal to Orestes' -- to free the people of Argos through vengeance -- but she differs both in her lack of perspective taking and in her unwillingness to bear the responsibility that follows. After murdering the king and queen on Electra's behalf, thereby completing his goal, Orestes declares himself thusly: "I am free, Electra. Freedom has struck me like a bolt of lightning;" but Electra, fearing the prospect of owning up to what she has brought about, insists, "Free? I don't feel free... We are not free to undo what has been done"

(Sartre, *Les Mouches* 210). This is indeed bad faith, the denial of responsibility via the refusal to accept freedom.

Thus Electra's character transformation is opposite to that of Orestes. Whereas he has gained an identity (of a "guilt-stealer") from his act, Electra wavers in her determination -- which is to say that her self-esteem plummets -- and denies any conscious involvement in the crime: "You dare to say I actually wanted this?... I dreamt of the crime, yes, but you carried it out" (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 222-223). Here she transfers her bad faith over to the second pattern, that of the denial of Facticity, and during Act III, she abandons her value system (and therefore, by extension, her freedom) when she chooses to repent before the god Jupiter. She talks a big game in the beginning, yet when faced with the consequences of her actions, she relinquishes her freedom in exchange for the comfort of being-for-others in bad faith, allowing remorse to consume her.

3.5 CONCLUSION: LES MOUCHES

With regard to Sartre's Existentialism, we see that Orestes has shown himself capable of acting freely. In the end, he accepts what he has done, acknowledges that this experience has allowed him to re-create himself anew, and is able to move forward. Because as Orestes himself proclaims, "Life begins on the other side of despair" (Sartre, *Les Mouches* 238). Which, true to existentialist fashion, is open to interpretation.

But as both protagonists have proven, it is possible to perform genuine altruism. By extension, altruism can also be dynamic -- even an act that begins in bad faith can become genuine. When it comes to the altruistic act of freeing the people of Argos, Orestes and Electra succeed, but it is the proper amount of self-esteem that permits this act to be free of bad faith in the end. At least for Orestes.

4. LES JEUX SONT FAITS

4.1 THE STORY

Sartre's scenario takes place in an unnamed country that is currently under military occupation by a Regent (very much resembling the German occupation of France during the Second World War), and follows two main protagonists. The first is Pierre Dumaine, a working-class leader of a resistance against the ruling military power. The second is Eve Charlier, an upper-class woman with many socialite friends. Both characters simultaneously find themselves betrayed and killed by people close to them. For Pierre, it is a fellow member of the insurrection, who is actually a spy for the Regent. For Eve, it is her husband, who wants ownership of her large dowry.

After their deaths, Pierre and Eve meet and take a liking to each other in Sartre's dour version of the afterlife, which is neither paradise nor damnation -- rather bureaucratic, occupied with paperwork and keeping to a schedule. The dead, still tethered to the Earth as ghosts but unable to communicate with the living or influence the world around them, instead experience an eternity of dullness and boredom. The distinction between the living and the dead is this: living people, free to affect the world, find themselves restricted by class and social pressure; dead people, free from any and all responsibility, can go wherever they please yet find themselves unable to do anything that would enact change.

But a bureaucrat of this afterlife notices a clerical kerfuffle and informs Pierre and Eve that, in life, they were supposed to have been soul mates. Thus, as compensation for their inopportune deaths, they both receive the opportunity to have their deaths undone, to return to life and live out the rest of their days with contentment, provided they can prove their love for each other within only twenty-four hours.

Problems arise, however, when both of our protagonists find themselves unable to ignore the social pressures of life. Not only do class differences come between the two, but Pierre wants to continue his work as the head of his insurrection against the Regent, and Eve wants to protect her younger sister, whom she believes to be the next target of her murderous husband. In the end, these preoccupations prove fatal, as Pierre and Eve stray from their goal of proving their love. Their time runs out, and they return to the afterlife, at which point they part ways.

4.2 ACTION-FOR-OTHERS AS THEME IN LES JEUX SONT FAITS

Pierre and Eve are dramatic altruists not only because they face a severe penalty in acting for others, in straying from their goal of proving their love for each other, but also because, in accordance with the bureaucratic processes of the afterlife Sartre constructs, the article that permits a return to life stipulates:

“Article 140: If, as a result of an error attributable to the sole direction, a man and a woman who were destined for each other did not meet during their lifetime, they may request and obtain authorization to return to life under certain conditions, to realize their love and live the common life of which they were unduly deprived” (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 67).

Under those “certain conditions,” Pierre and Eve shall receive no more than twenty-four hours to realize their love for each other. The evident danger qualifies them as dramatic altruists.

And as for the notion of self-esteem as crucial to the persistence of genuine altruism, we shall see that Pierre and Eve both fail twofold: they cannot maintain a proper level of self-esteem for their altruism to be genuine, and thus in bad faith they do not succeed in genuine being-for-others.

4.3 PIERRE’S BEING-FOR-OTHERS & BAD FAITH

Pierre's mission to save his friends from death demonstrates a dogged adherence to the first pattern of bad faith. While dead, Pierre infiltrates the palace of the Regent and meets several dead souls who blame the Regent for their deaths and now amuse themselves at the prospect of *his* eventual death. Pierre promises that this will soon occur, since he has "prepared everything" so that his insurrection will eliminate the Regent; he insists that all will be fine without him and even claims he is content not to have "wasted [his] life" (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 41-43). In death, Pierre shows attentiveness for his actions in life, for his past. He presents the following possibility as concrete reality: that his insurrection will not fail, that people will remember him as a great leader. Pierre convinces himself that his Transcendence is already part of his Facticity, thus he is in bad faith.

But the other dead souls tell him that the Regent knows of the insurrection's planned attack. This jeopardizes Pierre's Facticity, so he seeks to ensure that it remains intact -- he seeks to affirm it, and the opportunity to return to life gives him the perfect excuse. When he decides to abandon Eve, he tells her, "Eve, I must go see my friends. When I was... on the other side, I learned certain things. We have been betrayed. I must go warn them" (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 107-108). True, he demonstrates both empathy and perspective taking in his desire to save his fellow members of the insurrection, but Pierre believes he has no choice but to rescue his friends. He devotes himself to his leadership and to his friends and thus convinces himself that he cannot devote himself to Eve. As in the case of the eager waiter, Pierre's Facticity consumes him. And in the end, when Eve assures him that his work shall continue, Pierre is upset that he will not be the one to receive the glory (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 140). This demonstrates an excessively high level of self-esteem, as Pierre believes that he is -- rather, was -- most fit to be the leader. This also indicates a degree of bad faith in his quest, as he displayed a refusal to confront his

freedom to do anything other than be the leader of the insurrection. Thus, his attempt at altruism was also not genuine.

4.4 EVE'S BEING-FOR-OTHERS & BAD FAITH

Eve is the chief exemplar of the second pattern of bad faith. For example, while among the dead, Eve wanders along a road until she spots an amused crowd of living people gathered before a strongman. She notices that a young thief has taken advantage of the commotion to pickpocket people from the crowd. Eve shouts for someone to stop the thief because she refuses to believe that she is now dead, that she cannot communicate with the living (despite having just learned this). Off in the distance, Pierre also witnesses the thievery, though “with an air of amusement”; he knows that he is dead, but unlike Eve he has acclimated to his circumstance (and has yet to visit the palace of the Regent), and even when Eve approaches him and demands that he “do something,” Pierre remarks that she is “not yet used to [death]” (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 34). Eve’s disregard for her circumstance serves to devalue her reality. She presents her Facticity as Transcendence, and convinces herself that her Facticity is unimportant.

When Eve is alive, we see how her engagement in being-for-others proves dangerous. Soon after Pierre abandons her to pursue his altruistic quest, Eve decides to take it upon herself to embark on an altruistic quest of her own: to stop her widower (and murderer) André in his endeavor to marry (and later murder) her younger sister Lucette. And like Pierre, Eve shows concern for her Facticity. Eve decides that she has no choice but to help Lucette, that it would be utter devastation for such a young and innocent girl to fall prey to this crooked man’s deception. But rather than to save Lucette, Eve pursues her quest because she wishes to ruin André; she is out for revenge, which is why, even when she shows up unannounced and holds André at gunpoint and does not let Lucette leave (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 126-128, 135-136). In her

desire to rescue her sister, Eve demonstrates both empathy and perspective taking, quite aware of the consequences, but she wishes to control Lucette's perception of her. And like Pierre, Eve believes that she can get away with so-called heroism. Where her altruistic quest demonstrates bad faith is in her high degree of self-esteem. André ended her first life. In other words, he snubbed her first, so any action she takes to rectify this, she holds to be justified. She could search for Pierre, yet instead she feels compelled to go out on a petty revenge mission. Eve convinces herself that she has no choice but to engage in being-for-others, thus she is in bad faith.

4.5 CONCLUSION: LES JEUX SONT FAITS

With regard to Sartre's Existentialism, we see that neither Pierre nor Eve has demonstrated a willingness to accept facts. Together, they are supposed to have been destined for each other, yet they fail because of the choices they make. They have even shown themselves capable of collaborative bad faith in the sense that they, like Orestes and Electra, were charged with the same goal. In this sense, Sartre manages to subvert the deterministic nature of the world he has created.

Only at the end of the screenplay, after they fail to love each other, do Pierre and Eve realize that they cannot control the perceptions others may have of them, nor can altruism provide the foundation for such perceptions -- certainly not their brand, afflicted by bad faith. The ability to participate in life proves to be too much for Pierre and Eve to handle, and their unwillingness to shed their fixation with others dooms them. But perhaps most telling of Sartre's insistence to prove the optimism inherent of his existentialist philosophy is the last spoken phrase of the screenplay. Despite Pierre and Eve's failure in the face of Determinism, they advise

another young couple in a similar situation: “Try... Try anyway...” (Sartre, *Les Jeux Sont Faits* 143).

5. FINAL THOUGHTS

Genuine altruism can and does exist. Sartre infuses his early forays into fiction with examples of altruism afflicted by bad faith to demonstrate how we might misunderstand genuine altruism. Much in the same way his branch of existentialist philosophy had found a home among the other, more nihilistic doctrines of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, genuine altruism is often explained away as ultimately selfish at day’s end. But thanks to the analysis of more than one character in each of Sartre’s works, we have a more thorough understanding of the existentialist elements at play, and can better account for their relation to altruism.

To be sure, this study has had its limitations. For one, the methodology is of a qualitative approach, thus we lack a quantitative aspect. But in regards to both a philosophical movement and a moral phenomenon, researchers may have trouble measuring subjectivity, assigning numerical value to perception, and quantifying lies. These are definite considerations of future research, for which this study may serve as a preliminary reading.

Remember that freedom is not necessarily the capacity to do whatever you want, but a utility for acting responsibly with consideration to both past and present -- consideration, not fixation. As our analysis of the texts elucidates, altruism is dynamic, which is to say that it can start out genuine and fall prey to bad faith, and vice versa, as in the case of Orestes. But as Sartre asserts, we can always choose not to let the past define us.

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