Feminist Authenticity

an Existentialist Conception

by

Siera Aubrey Lee Scott

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Cheshire Calhoun, Co-chair
Patricia Huntington, Co-chair
Steven Reynolds

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ABSTRACT

Authenticity has been conceived of in several different ways with various meanings and implications. The existential conception has the advantage of tracking authenticity from the phenomenology of human beings and their lived, social experience. From Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger's criteria for existentialist authenticity, I develop the argument that authentic, feminist projects are necessarily one mode of being authentic within a patriarchal society. In defining a conception of authenticity out of Sartre and Heidegger's terms, the question of what qualifies as an authentic feminist project arises as well as the question of what sort of content qualifies as authentic. While Simone De Beauvoir does not focus on authenticity in her ethics, she does give a basis for a value oriented, content relevant aspect of existentialism generally. Insofar as authenticity is an existentialist concept, feminist authenticity is one valuable and worthwhile project within a social patriarchy, as it promotes existence as freedom.

DEDICATION

To my mother and father, for always supporting my choices and allowing my own
authenticity to grow. Thank you for always allowing me to bring my ideas and work to
the dinner table.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Authenticity has often been thought of as part of a theory of self-hood such as in Charles Taylor[1] and Corey Anton[2]. On this sort of view authenticity is thought to apply to people who are "true to themselves". The issue becomes, what is the true self? Various conceptions of authenticity have tried to respond to this question. At the end of his book, *On Being Authentic*, Charles Guignon describes a more social function of authentic being.[3] Guignon's picture of authenticity involves not merely a theory of the authentic self, but a theory of the authentically *social* self. I propose that an existential conception of authenticity is well suited to this social aspect of human beings. My goal is to describe one mode of *being* authentic in current U.S. society. The instance of authenticity that I have in mind is socially constituted and bears much of what Guignon seems to value in a conception of authenticity. The conception of authenticity that I plan to promote, first, does not ignore the social involvement of human beings, and second, adds a morally substantive aspect to authenticity which is commonly thought to be missing in the existential conceptions put forth by Heidegger and Sartre. Simone De Beauvior has envisioned existentialism as being a way for human beings to project value onto the world, thereby being the source of value in the world.[4]

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[1] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) and *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991).

[2] Corey Anton, *Selfhood and Authenticity*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2001).

[3] Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic*, Thinking in Action, (New York, Routledge, 2004).

[4] Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, (Philosophical Library, 1948).

Heidegger and Sartre, in Being and Time and Being and Nothingness both focus on existentialist *being* apart from but not necessarily explicitly excluding an entailed ethics. De Beauvior on the other hand, recognizes and seeks to address the criticism that existentialism as a philosophy leaves no room for ethics. In my own explanation of feminist authenticity, I will drawl first from Heidegger and Sartre's existentialism and later develop an argument for the ethical implications of authenticity (specifically regarding feminist authenticity).

Both Heidegger and Sartre take a phenomenological approach toward a conception of authenticity. Heidegger seems to describe authenticity in two different contexts: being towards death, and the everydayness of da-sein.[5] Sartre's analysis of authenticity is discussed in terms of its negation, namely, bad faith.[6] My first move is to construct a conception of feminist authenticity from my understandings of both Heidegger and Sartre. In doing so, I hope to answer two primary questions in this paper: 1) How should we describe the inauthentic feminist? 2) Is it possible for one to be an authentic oppressor? It is through De Beauvior's response to existential criticism that we will find a response to this later question. Through the culmination of these existentialist conceptions, I think that we will find that authentic being is a worthwhile project for all human beings; my aim here is to tackle one specific mode of *being* authentic (feminist authenticity), though I think there are many modes of living an authentic life. Whether one can achieve a wholly authentic life in all aspects is a question that I will not pursue in this project.

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[5] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (State University of New York Press, 2010).

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington Square Press, 1956).

I intend to develop a groundwork for an understanding of feminist authenticity not only out of the conceptions of both Heidegger and Sartre, but also with Guignon's critique in mind. Nevertheless, after explicating and extracting the primary ideas of their existentialist conceptions, I will draw from further implications and interpretations of their thought. I think that existentialist authenticity considering Heidegger, Sartre, and De Beauvoir, bears significant weight in terms of human life projects as well as moral responsibility for members of any social context. It is my view that an authentic way of being in the world can be realized (among other modes of being in the world) through feminist being. With this in mind, my project is most relevant to our being in a patriarchal world.

CHAPTER 2

GUINGON: THE MEANING OF AUTHENTICTY

In his book, Guignon takes the reader through a history of authenticity as its

conception has evolved over time. Conceptions of authenticity were once considered

from a cosmological perspective where being authentic simply meant knowing one's

(given) place in the world. This conception evolved into a more anthropocentric

interpretation during the period of enlightenment and further evolved into a post-modern

conception of self-determinism or self-hood. The early view is far removed from the

existentialist approach since it declares a given place or station to the individual. On this

cosmological view, an individual is authentic if they have found their place in the natural

given order of the world. Guignon says of this view,

> To know yourself, then, is to know above all what your *place* is in the scheme of
> things- what you are and what you should be as that has been laid out in advance by the
> cosmic order.[7]

While the existentialist takes off from the phenomenological standpoint of human

existence as freedom, the cosmological view arises from the standpoint of a given natural

order. The modern view of the enlightenment period created a drastic shift from the

cosmological perspective to a highly individualized conception of the "true self" as

authentic.

The modern view picks up on the general existentialist idea that the authentic self

is not a given within the world, but rather a self-made individual to be distinguished from

a socially constructed society. This view however, completely disregards the fact that

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[7] Charles Guignon, 13.

human beings exist in a social world. Regarding this view, Guignon describes the social self as being "other" than the authentic self.[8] According to Guignon (and I agree), the problem with this highly individualized conception is that it neglects the social world in which we live and claims it as irrelevant to or contrary to authenticity; authenticity becomes entirely internal, while our social being becomes entirely outside of our "true selves". The modern conception holds the authentic self to be a wholly internal self apart from the constructively fabricated social self. Guignon says of this conception that,

> The authentic self is the individual who can stand alone, shedding all status relations and social entanglements…The opposition between social existence and actual life provides the framework for the response envisioned in the ideal of becoming authentic.[9]

While the earlier pre-modern view holds authenticity as a given placement within society entirely, in opposition, the modern view holds authenticity as wholly separate from society.

Finally, Guignon describes the post-modern conception of authenticity as opposing the modern view of an internally (non-social) "true self".[10] On this view, the self turns out to be a by-product of society rather than being a part of the social order (the pre-modern cosmological view), or being solely internal and entirely removed from the social world (the modern individualistic view). In other words, the self is nothing other than what society has made it. On this view, to be authentic is to embrace a *lack* of self since the only self to be found is artificially shaped by society. The post-modern view

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[8] Charles Guignon, 33-35.

[9] Charles Guignon, 72.

[10] Charles Guignon, 117-19.

holds that there is not a self to be sought.[11] Authenticity seems to lose traction as a valuable conception on this view almost entirely, since "the self" is found to be nothing. Guignon says, "We are true to ourselves… when we unflinchingly face the fact that there is nothing to be true to."[12] In some sense, this is closer to an existentialist conception, since the self is not a given, but is ultimately nothing. Still, this conception falls short of the existentialist's phenomenological picture of human existence as freedom.

Guignon critiques the different conceptions of authenticity, ultimately determining that a satisfying conception must go beyond a theory of self-discovery, self-determinism, or "being true to oneself" (whatever that turns out to mean). Human beings do not exist in the world in a wholly internal way. Rather than falling into an overly individualistic account, Guignon suggests that we approach authenticity from the perspective of our existence in the world; that is in a social world with others. Guignon says,

> Seen from this point of view, becoming an authentic individual is not a matter of recoiling from society in order to find and express the inner self. What it involves is the ability to be a reflective individual who discerns what is genuinely worth pursuing *within the social context in which he or she is situated*.[13]

Part of my project is to describe a socially constituted conception of authenticity. I think that an existentially grounded conception of authenticity might be responsive to Guignon's concerns; existentialism in general is concerned with human existence, and our existence is within a social world. The phenomenological approach adopted by both

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[11] Charles Guignon, 119.

[12] Charles, Guignon, 120.

[13] Charles Guignon, 155, italics are mine.

Heidegger and Sartre, carries with it the social condition of human beings in their conceptions of authenticity.

The specific case of authenticity that I plan to describe is one which is socially embedded in our current patriarchal society, namely, feminist authenticity. My argument is that feminist being is *necessarily a mode of* authenticity so long as one is a member of a patriarchal society, and further that this mode of being is valuable insofar as it fosters moral progress within a social context. I do not mean that authenticity necessarily requires feminism, rather that feminism in its most socially involved form is necessarily authentic in the relevant social context.

Existential philosophers were not unaware of the social embeddedness of human beings; I hope to make some of their abstract conceptions of authenticity more concrete by applying their conceptions to the case of feminist authenticity. Guignon's critique of recent conceptions of authenticity is that they have become too individualized and internal to the point of excluding the social nature of our existence as human beings. In agreement with this point, my own critique is that these different conceptions do not represent the important existential qualities that most cater to Guignon's proposed conception of a socially involved characterization of authenticity.

Existentialism grounds the concept of authenticity into the phenomenological characterization of human existence as we experience it. Since our lived experience is socially involved, an existential approach to authenticity will provide the social aspect that is missing from other conceptions. An existentialist approach will also guard against conceptions which distort the human experience into a wholly internal one devoid of social content. Another way to describe the difficulties of the conceptions which Guignon

discusses, is in terms of subjectivity and objectivity. The early cosmological account runs the risk of misrepresenting the human experience as an objective experience. On this view, to be in the world is to be objectively one's place in the natural order. Conversely, the modern individualized account fails to place human existence in the social world at all, but instead plants our experience entirely into our subjectivity. Finally, the post-modern conception fails to acknowledge human beings' existence as freedom (i.e., as being able to choose among our possibilities).

In *Existence and Freedom*, Calvin Schrag describes existentialism as a phenomenological method which lies beyond a subjective or objective approach to human existence.[14] Schrag says,

> The existentialist concept of "being in the world," arising from man's pre-theoretical encounter with his existential world of personal and practical concerns…is the primary phenomenological concept through which it becomes possible to undercut the subject-object dichotomy.[15]

This is the heart of the response that existentialism offers a conception of authenticity; an authentic being is neither wholly objective nor subjective in lived experience, but rather exists in terms of both "personal and practical concerns," to use Schrag's words. Authentic being on this view, does not hinge on either side of the supposed dichotomy, but instead, as we will see, on human existence as freedom.

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[14] Calvin Schrag, *Existence and Freedom*, (Northwestern University Press, 1961).

[15] Calvin Schrag, 8.

CHAPTER 3

HEIDEGGER: FALLING PREY

Heidegger's work is meant as an ontology from a standpoint of phenomenology.[16]

In other words, Heidegger's intention is to develop an ontology of human existence

through an analysis of human experience. I am primarily concerned with Heidegger's

phenomenology of Da-sein's being in the world with others, but it is also necessary to

emphasize the finite existence of human beings. In Heideggarian terms, Da-sein simply

put, means human being. Early on in his *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes human

beings from objects which have given attributes,

> The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as
> its ownmost possibility. Dasein *is* always its possibility. It does not 'have' that
> possibility only as a mere attribute of something objectively present.[17]

This will be key in understanding why authenticity applies to human beings at all. While

it seems obvious that human beings are not in existence in the same way that inanimate

objects are, this distinction is what captures the phenomenological existence of human

beings. Human beings are concerned with their own being in ways that other beings, and

more obviously, objects are not. Human beings exist as possibility and every human

being has the potential within itself to be authentically Da-sein, whereas objects do not

have this sort of possibility. To exist as possibility is to give oneself purpose and

meaning. According to Heidegger (and Sartre as we will see later), human beings are

distinct from other beings and objects in that they do not exist as mere *facticity*. That is,

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[16] Heidegger, BT, 289.

[17] Heidegger, BT, 42.

Da-sein "does not express its what- as in the case of table, house, tree- but rather being (sein)."[18] For example, a pencil does not have potential or possibility in the same way that I do because a pencil does not give itself its purpose. A pencil is given a very specific purpose, and any other purpose that it might serve will likely be for human projects. Da-sein on the other hand, exists in terms of its possibilities, and further, is concerned with its very being and becoming, (i.e., its own possibilities). It seems obvious to point out that my pencil is not concerned with its own being and its own purpose; the pencil *is* simply given its purpose, namely, that of a writing utensil. But this distinction is an important one. Contrary to the pencil, I am not *given* a purpose. My purpose is in my own possibilities, and I am free to choose among those possibilities. For example: in so far as *I am* a student of philosophy, I am a student of philosophy because *I choose* to be so. In other words, I was not given the purpose or position of being a philosophy student as the pencil was given the purpose of being a writing utensil. We will see later that it is also important to note that when I choose to be a philosophy student, I am necessarily choosing not to be a number of other things.

According to Heidegger, human existence can take on two primary modes of being, *authentic* being, and *inauthentic* being. [19] Since human beings never exist merely objectively (i.e., in their facticity), they are always involved in their own human projects. Human beings are concerned with various projects, some as small and immediate as checking the mail or preparing a meal, others large and long-term such as attending graduate school, setting goals for the future, investing in a savings account, and the like.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Heidegger, BT, 42-44.

Heidegger discusses human projects in terms of *care*.[20] Whether being in the mode of authenticity or the mode of inauthenticity, Da-sein *is* always care, is always involved in projects. I take this to mean that sometimes Da-sein is authentically involved in projects and other times Da-sein is inauthentically involved in projects. The task at hand is to determine what this means.

Heidegger does not deny that human beings exist *with* other human beings. As part of the *thrownness* of Da-sein, Da-sein exists within a certain context (i.e. within a certain space and time).[21] That is, human beings are initially thrown into existence within a certain context. We are oriented within space and time, and further within a culture and a society. I take this aspect of human existence as particularly important to one's potential authenticity. While Heidegger does not necessarily frame authentic *being* in terms of the social nature of our existence in the world, he does have something to say about societal influences in regard to human projects and possibilities. One aspect of inauthenticity according to Heidegger, occurs when Da-sein becomes overly involved in the average *everydayness* of being in the world with others.[22] Sometimes (perhaps most of the time), human beings become extremely involved in the projects of social constructs, (e.g. finances, fashion, common social practices) norms, and everyday activities, leading to the neglect of other more authentic possibilities. Some of these possibilities may be practical ones, and others may not be, let us set this issue aside for the moment.

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[20] Heidegger, BT, 56-62.

[21] Heidegger, BT, 169-73.

[22] Heidegger, BT, 111-12, 123.

For example, suppose that Phil is so wholly involved in his job that he neglects

other possibilities and ways of being that are important to him. Phil's projects become

overwhelmed with daily routines and practices all revolving around his job and the social

practices involved with his co-workers. He wakes up every day at the same time so that

he can stop and pick up coffees for his co-workers, he complains about the prices and

slow service at the coffee shop, he becomes frustrated with the music on the radio and the

traffic on the way to and from work. On the weekends Phil pre-occupies himself with

keeping up on the latest trends in the office, Jim and Tom have new Apple watches, and

Dave has the coolest neck-ties. The point to be made is this, Phil is certainly concerned

with human projects, but the projects which he is concerning himself with are not *his*

projects unless he *chooses them as his own*. In this example, not only has Phil tied

himself up in the projects prescribed by society and social influence, but further he fails

to regard his projects as *chosen*. Phil takes up projects merely because they are prescribed

by society; he is losing his authentic self to *the they* or *das-Man*.[23] Heidegger uses these

two terms somewhat interchangeably; both refer to other human beings in the world with

Das-sein. Human beings are in fact *thrown* into the world with others. Even in the case

that one prefers to be alone and thus takes up the project of avoiding others, she still

exists as *mit-sein*,

> But even when actual factical Dasein does *not* turn to others and thinks that it does not
> need them, it *is* in the mode of being-with.[24]

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[23] Heidegger, BT, 111-26.

[24] Heidegger, BT, 120.

Heidegger understands that humans exist socially in the world and that their projects take place in the social world. Being authentic in regard to one's social being involves some resistance to *falling prey* to the everydayness of Da-sein.[25] In the example described above, Phil has *fallen prey* to the social norms and averageness of his everyday life, not because he participates in social projects, but because he takes them to be a given. Phil falls prey because he accepts his projects rather than choosing them as his own. To *fall prey* is to fall into a mode of being inauthentic. Note that it is possible that Phil could happen to prefer and thus freely choose societies prescribed projects freely. In this case, it remains possible that he authentically chooses those projects as his own.

While this is certainly not all that Heidegger has to say about authenticity, his notion of human beings in society and *falling prey* are most relevant to my overall project of depicting a conception of feminist authenticity. Focusing on the current social, political, and cultural climate of current U.S. practices and norms, we, as Da-sein are *thrown* into a patriarchy. To fall prey in this context then, is in part to become in sync with the everydayness of our patriarchal society and to persist in projects and social roles which perpetuate oppressive social practices. Heidegger's notions of *falling prey*, *thrownness*, and *das-man* are helpful in thinking about how we exist and persist in the world of patriarchy. Further, through these concepts we are given some indication of what authenticity might entail. According to Heidegger, one's potential for authentic being in part hinges on in what ways one participates in everyday social practices and norms. Participation in society is not itself an indication of inauthentic being; the danger arises in the exclusion and abandonment of human possibilities. Does Phil take up his

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[25] Heidegger, BT, 175-81.

projects and choose them as his own among his human possibilities, or is he wholly influenced and submersed in what others are doing and expecting him to do? Do his projects further the freedoms and possibilities of human beings? In the case that Phil is being inauthentic, he is excluding from himself his own possibilities and ways of existing.

I mentioned earlier that human beings may either authentically or inauthentically take up their projects. The take-away from Heidegger on this matter is that human existence is distinct in that it is concerned with its being. Insofar as Phil merely is what he is expected to be, and takes up the projects expected of him, he cannot authentically do so if he denies his existence as human possibility. What does this say about authentic being? Authentic being in society does not take the social roles and prescriptions as a given. Authentic being rather, considers the value of all possibilities within the social context that one finds themselves in and chooses those that best promote human possibility. Social practices are not necessarily contrary to human existence as freedom and possibility, however they do tend to threaten human existence as freedom; society presents its prescribed roles and practices as if they are *factical* (i.e., as if the prescribed roles are the nature of human existence). Authenticity thus does not require that one oppose social practices and norms, but that one does not accept them as a factical description of their being. To accept one's being as possibility for Heidegger, it is further necessary that one accepts the inevitable certainty of death. Since it is *possible* that one die at any point, death is both a certainty and always a considerable possibility for da-sein.

CHAPTER 4

HEIDEGGER: DEATH AND ANGST

Since for human beings, death is a certain event, there is a kind of almost unavoidable anxiety when one confronts their future possibilities since one of those possibilities is always death. One of the dangers of falling prey is that the submersion in everydayness distances da-sein from her being toward death. That is, one way to avoid one's natural anxiety about death is to avoid it as a possibility and instead busy oneself with the *averageness*, or the "every day indifference" of day to day living.[26] Since Da-sein is defined by its concern for its own being, indifference about being is inauthentic. From this fallen perspective, death becomes something distant which happens not to me and my loved ones, but to others.[27] Society further dictates the proper manner of dealing with death; there are prescribed ways of grieving and limits upon how much grieving is enough or too much. It is not thought of as healthy to concern oneself with death as a possibility without cause,

> Even thinking about death is regarded publicly as cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity on the part of Da-sein and a dark flight from the world. The they does not permit the courage to have angst about death.[28]

To be authentic, Da-sein must face her own *being toward death*. Since human beings are beings which are concerned with their own existence, and further, beings which concern themselves with their future existence and future possibilities, it is necessary that authentic Da-sein face her existence as finite. In other words, authentic Da-sein is responsible for her finite life project. To fall prey is to avoid this responsibility (thereby avoiding angst) by becoming

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[26] Heidegger, BT, 43.

[27] Heidegger, BT, 243.

[28] Heidegger, BT, 244.

immersed in averageness. To be inauthentic is to avoid one's existence as possibility, and to avoid one's existence as possibility is to avoid one's existence as being toward death.

It is tempting for Da-sein to elude the inevitable possibility of death, because such a possibility evokes an anguishing feeling. However, the authentic way to confront this feeling is to take responsibility for future possibilities and take up concern for one's overall life project. This sort of forward thinking can also cause one to feel angst about the future, this is because we are our possibilities and for this we are responsible. The easiest way to avoid angst is to submerge oneself into the average everydayness of das-man, and submit to a life of inauthentic being. To escape one's feelings of angst and responsibility, one may become submersed in a prescribed life rather than taking responsibility for the forming of one's own path. The take away from Heidegger is thus not to entirely disentangle oneself from society, but to face your existence in society as possibility within that society and to confront your finite time in the world. Note that this interpretation embraces both Heidegger's conception of authenticity, as well as Guignon's suggestion that the concept of authenticity entail social aspect. Authenticity and inauthenticity are both socially involved; the key for being authentic is in how one chooses to face one's being toward death within their social context. To be authentic is thus to be concerned with one's being (towards death and within a thrown social context), rather than choosing projects indifferently (thereby escaping human existence as freedom and being toward

death). Authentic persons are not indifferent about their projects, but are

concerned with them and aware of their responsibility for choosing them.

CHAPTER 5

SARTRE: BAD FAITH AND FREEDOM

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Sartre shares some similar intuitions with Heidegger regarding human beings as possibility; Sartre also has his own language for describing human beings as not wholly *factical*. For Sartre, the primary distinctions to be made between human existence and the existence of objects are between the ordering of essence and existence,[29] which will correlate with the *in-itself*, and the *for-itself*.[30] According to Sartre, in the case of human beings, existence always precedes essence, where as in the case of objects, essence precedes the existence of the object. For example, when I write this paper, the essence of the project is very much in place prior to the completion of the paper. I give the project its essence before the thing exists. Unlike objects, whose essence is given, human beings are constantly choosing their own essence. In order to connect these conceptions of essence, possibility, and freedom to authenticity, Sartre fills in these concepts in terms of *bad faith*.[31] Sartre's concept of bad faith is meant to articulate a mode of failing to be authentic, (i.e., failing to exist authentically toward oneself, toward others, and toward the world). I am not going to delve into a definition of authenticity here as bad faith is itself the negation of authenticity. Through Sartre's concept of bad faith, we get a device for creating more concrete examples of what authenticity (and as I will later argue, feminist authenticity) looks like.

Bad faith is first and foremost a form of deception. However, Sartre is careful in distinguishing mere deception from a special sort of self-deception.[32] To be in bad faith is

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[29] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 21-22.

[30] Sartre, BN, 96-99.

[31] Sartre, BN, 96-158.
[32] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington Square Press, 1956), 86-91.

to hide the truth of freedom, possibility and thus responsibility from oneself. While this sort of self-deception may very well dupe others as well, it is directed at oneself. Bad faith is to some extent an intentional escape from the freedom to choose oneself; it is a way to avoid the responsibility that human freedom entails. Just as Heidegger discusses angst or anguish, Sartre discusses fear of freedom as anxiety. A person cannot be authentic if they deceive themselves about their very being, that is their existence as freedom. To be clear, there is no necessary contradiction in the case of an authentic liar, for the authentic liar does not attempt to deceive himself; nevertheless, it may also be the case that the liar is in bad faith regarding her lies to others.

Consider the following example, Phil's wife has a habit of forgetting to set an alarm when the cookies are in the oven. As a result of her forgetfulness, she often burns the cookies. Phil lies to his wife, and claims that he loves the taste of burnt cookies. Insofar as Phil is merely attempting to relieve his wife's disappointment, Phil is not necessarily in bad faith. At this point, his deception is aimed toward his wife, not himself. Suppose further that Phil's wife is wholly deceived and so takes to burning the cookies on purpose just for Phil. If Phil does not relinquish the truth about his distaste of burnt cookies but continues to lie to his wife and further to himself about his tastes for cookies, then he may be in danger of falling into bad faith. Suppose that Phil continues on eating burnt cookies and convincing himself and his wife that he loves them, he may escape the possibility of telling the truth which would likely disappoint his wife. However, the key is whether or not Phil takes up the role of eating and preferring burnt cookies *as if he has no other choice in the matter*. That is, if Phil moves to convince himself that he is doomed to eat burnt cookies for the rest of his life, then he deceives himself. Only if Phil rejects that

the possibility of telling the truth is an option is he in bad faith in regard to his tastes for cookies. Of course, this is a silly example, but the point is, bad faith requires a sufficient amount of self-deception about one's possibilities, i.e. freedom to choose.

The cookie case brings about an important point, that a person can be involved in small acts of bad faith, and/or much more significant acts of bad faith. In fact, it may be the case that some small acts of bad faith throughout one's life are nearly impossible to avoid, but I take Sartre to be more concerned with the case of living one's life *as a whole* in bad faith. It is one thing to hide from yourself the possibility of enjoying a fresh unburnt cookie, but quite another to hide from yourself the possibility of living in accord with your core values or moral beliefs and the like. After all, Phil may possibly even benefit in his relationship to his wife if he persists in this one repetitive act of bad faith, but there are far more detrimental modes of being in bad faith. Later I will discuss some examples which fall somewhere in-between the mundane and the detrimental.

For now, I am interested in clarifying the concept a bit further. This will require the addition of two more concepts which Sartre calls *being in-itself* and *being for-itself*. The meanings of these concepts are derived from objectivity and subjectivity, respectively. This is Sartre's way of further differentiating things from persons. Things exist in the world with a given essence whereas human beings do not. In the earlier section on Heidegger I used the example of the pencil, Sartre uses the example of a paper knife,

> We cannot suppose that a man would produce a paper knife without knowing
> what purpose it would serve. Let us say therefore, that the essence of the paper knife-that

is, the sum of formulae and properties that enable it to be produced and defined-precedes its essence.[33]

This distinction is important in terms of bad faith, not simply because a manufactured object cannot *be* in bad faith, rather because it is in a way this feigned mode of pretending to *be* as the object *is* that a person can be in bad faith. Human beings are not as objects are; we do not begin with an essence, rather we *choose* our essence. Consider another of Sartre's examples,

> I can not say either that I *am* here or that I *am* not here, in the sense that we may say 'that box of matches is on the table', this would be to confuse my 'being-in-the-world' with a 'being-in-the-midst-of-the-world.'.[34]

The paper knife, the box of matches, the table, are all *things in-themselves*, whereas persons are *things for-themselves*. To deny the freedom of one's subjectivity is to deceive oneself into a confusion about being-in oneself rather than being-for oneself; this is bad faith. To be sure, bad faith is not a clean and clear concept. Sartre himself admits that the best way to gain any degree of desired clarification on the matter is to examine exemplary cases of bad faith.[35] I hope to at this point have provided the conceptual tools needed to examine bad faith a bit more critically.

For the purpose of establishing a baseline I will begin with Sartre's own example: Suppose that there is a waiter at a cafe,

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[33] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 21.

[34] Sartre, BN, 103.

[35] Sartre, BN, 96.

His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer.[36]

Sartre says that this waiter is in bad faith. One might inquire as to why this waiter, doing the precise actions of a waiter must be in bad faith. The waiter leaves his patrons as well as himself with no indication that he is *for-himself* his own possibilities. That is, he "plays at being a waiter" to use Sartre's words, as if he simply *is* a waiter. Let's examine the text closely:

> What I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café waiter, as if it were not just in my power to confer their value and their urgency upon my duties and the rights of my position, as if it were not my free choice to get up each morning at five O' clock or to remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired. As if from the very fact that I sustained this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side, as if I did not constitute myself as one *beyond* my condition. Yet there is no doubt that I *am* in a sense the café waiter- otherwise could I not just as well call myself a diplomat or a reporter? But if I am one, this cannot be in the mode of being-in-itself. I am a waiter in the mode of *being what I am not.*[37]

Here Sartre gives us several reasons as to why this particular waiter is in bad faith. He goes about the business of being a waiter as if it is not the case that he *chooses* to be a waiter in each of his waiting actions, including his waking up each morning on time, as though his very *being* determines that he must do so. The point is in part that the waiter chooses to play the role of being a waiter, but does not acknowledge his possibilities to freely choose otherwise nor does he acknowledge that he *chooses* to be a waiter in each of his actions as he works; he ignores the negation of other possibilities in his choosing as such. The second part, as stated at the end of the quote emphasizes that insofar as the

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[36] Sartre, BN, 101.

[37] Sartre, BN, 103.

waiter is a waiter, he is so merely in the mode of not being his other possibilities, yet he plays at being a waiter as if to *be* a waiter is *to be him*.

After a close look at Sartre's café waiter, the how and why of the waiter's bad faith becomes clear. However, the social reality of persons in their everyday lives is far more complicated than that of the waiter as depicted. To be clear, Sartre admits of social influence and intricacy, but many of his examples are simplified for the purposes of conceptual clarification. I am interested in examining a more complicated example of what it might mean to be in bad faith. Some questions that I hope to pull out in this discussion include: first, does bad faith only relate to deception about possibilities, or is it also relevant to taking responsibility for choices? Second, can one choose X in bad faith at one point in life, and then later choose X authentically? Third, Are there varying degrees of bad faith?

Suppose that Phil is the waiter in the café. Let us assume all the above from Sartre's example about Phil while he is at work. Phil works forty hours a week waiting tables at the café and makes good money which helps to support his family. Phil's true passion is art; he has always wanted to be an artist. Phil spends a few hours a week working on his paintings and sketches. Phil hereby chooses to be a waiter and chooses art as a mere hobby despite his desire to choose otherwise. Insofar as Phil does not acknowledge his choice to be a waiter over an artist, or his choice to pursue art as a mere hobby rather than a career, he is in bad faith. It seems clear in terms of Sartre, Phil is in bad faith because he denies himself the free possibility of quitting his job at the café and becoming an artist. Note that authenticity does not require that Phil quit his job and become an artist, it requires that he *acknowledge his choosing* what to be and what not to

be *in any case*. Phil chooses to be a waiter each and every time he goes to work and with each action while he works. Phil gets up every day at five O' clock in the morning as if he is not choosing not to become an artist each day. Phil is choosing not to become an artist each time he chooses to be a waiter at the café. Sartre says,

> And what is the goal of bad faith? To cause me to be what I am, in the mode of 'not being what one is,' or not to be what I am in the mode of 'being what one is.' We find here the same game of mirrors. In fact, in order for me to have an intention of sincerity, I must at the outset simultaneously be and not be what I am.[38]

Here Sartre means that Phil is not merely playing at being a waiter, while also being Phil otherwise, e.g. a husband, father, painter… rather Phil deceives himself into the mode of being a waiter full stop. But Phil cannot be a waiter in the same way that the pencil is a pencil. Phil is thus in bad faith in three distinct ways: Phil escapes his own possibility to be other than a waiter (e.g. an artist), he escapes his actual *being* other than a waiter, and he escapes his responsibility for *choosing* to be a waiter. Now let's give Phil a bit more reality; bad faith may be quite difficult to avoid under the pressure of real world conditions.

Suppose that Phil chose to become a waiter because that was the best option available to him at the time, and he needed the money to support his family. Phil applied to the café because he and his wife had only one car and his wife needed the car to get their child to school and take herself to work twenty miles away. Phil could walk to the café each morning, and the money would be good. Suppose that Phil knew that he could instead work from home as an artist and sell his paintings on the weekends for less money. In this sense, Phil authentically chose to wait tables instead. Phil weighed the

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[38] Sartre, BN, 110.

possible options, acknowledging his freedom to choose and prioritize his possibilties, and felt that the most responsible choice was to accept the job at the café. I think that Phil can have made an authentic choice ten years ago, but now be in bad faith regarding that same choice. Over time, Phil has convinced himself that he is stuck being a waiter at the café. Further suppose that Phil's wife got a big promotion and large pay increase, but Phil fails to regain responsibility for his freedom; Phil fails to revisit his prior choice, and in this failure, he escapes both his continuing freedom to choose otherwise, and his continuing responsibility for choosing as he does. Thus, Phil's formerly authentic choice to become a waiter has become a repetitive act of bad faith over time, since he fails to regard any of his other possibilities, including that of being an artist. Note also that even in the case that it is never financially practical for Phil to choose an art career over waiting at the cafe, the possibility still stands. The key is whether Phil acknowledges his freedom to choose even the most impractical of possibilities as well as his freedom to continue choosing a thing for the sake of practicality. Phil may fail to choose authentically in part because he fails to realize that he is choosing to prioritize based upon chosen values or standards. Insofar as Phil chooses to be a waiter, he chooses to value the practicality of this choice over his other possibilities. To deny that he has made the choice either way is to deny his very existence as possibility and confuse his existence with one of a given essence.

So far, I hope to have established two things: first, bad faith has to do with the denial of freedom as well as some denial about responsibility. Second, the condition of bad faith can develop over time; an authentic choice now might not be an authentic choice to maintain down the road; one must continually make choices and take responsibility for them even if the same choice is made repeatedly, as is often the case.

To maintain some measure of authenticity, one must revisit one's possibilities and choose accordingly. Further, Phil's early financial situation certainly confined his choices in some way, (though Phil is always free), yet he was able to authentically choose the waiting position despite his passion for art, so long as he was aware of his other possibilities, however impractical they may have been at the time. Phil is authentic if he acknowledges that his choosing to be or do a thing is also his choosing not to be or not to do other things, and further acknowledging his decision to value some choices over others (e.g., choosing to value practicality over creative desire). If one truly acknowledges one's choices, then one may also realize that many choices also presuppose an underlying value of some sort which is thereby also freely chosen.

Neither Sartre nor Heidegger discuss values in terms of freedom, but I argue that values must play a role. When one makes a choice and acts on it, one is in effect choosing a value of some sort. Phil in the above example has chosen financial stability. However, over time, Phil fails to take responsibility for this chosen value. First, he ceases to acknowledge his choices as free. Phil may choose authentically to remain a waiter so long as he acknowledges that he holds these two values: financial stability, and artistic creation. He must then also assume responsibility for choosing one value in his actions over the other. Instead, Phil acts as though he has no choice in the matter. I turn now to the question of bad faith in degree.

I am not sure that Sartre had any sort of scale in mind when he developed his concept of bad faith. But it seems to me possible that bad faith may function this way; I will argue that it does. Consider a new case: Phil works as a bookstore clerk. Phil firmly believes that one ought not to go to work when one is ill. The bookstore management

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frowns upon any instance of absence unless one is in the hospital. The employees at the bookstore all feel shame when they call off of work due to a common illness (one which does not require a visit to the doctor). Phil's co-worker tells Phil one day that she is feeling ill, and will be very uncomfortable at work. Phil advises his friendly co-worker to call off for the day, explaining that one's job is not as important as one's health and the health of others. Phil says that it is the right thing to do, and that management ought to respect that. Suppose that a few weeks later, Phil is ill. Phil feels much pressure to go to work, he does not want to face management later in the week when he returns if he calls off now. Phil goes to work. Is Phil in bad faith? Insofar as Phil admits that he ought to have called off, and that he was free to do so, he seems not to be in bad faith. He labored in much deliberation before deciding to go to work after all. Yet Phil is in some sense convincing himself that he must go to work, due to the authoritative pressure that he feels from his management and perhaps his peers. I pose that Phil is to some degree in bad faith. Phil is aware of his possibilities, yet, he is denying his responsibility for his choice, and instead, blaming it on his managers and the pressures which they enforce upon their employees. Phil is not being wholly authentic. If this is correct, then bad faith may be a matter of degree; one can be in bad faith in regard to responsibility for freedom even when one is not in bad faith regarding one's possibilities. I further propose that another scaling factor may be found in how consistent one is regarding their chosen values.

In the example above, Phil holds two values and chooses among them. In this case, his values are not necessarily contradictory. One can hold both a value for financial stability as well as a value for artistic creativity. Thus, in that case as we have discussed it, this factor may not play a part in the scale of Phil's authenticity. However, it seems to

me that, if one holds two separate values which are inconsistent with one another, then any time that person acts upon either value they are in danger of acting in bad faith. In such a case the person is likely deceiving themselves about their holding one value or the other. For example, if I value human equality whilst also valuing tall people over short people, then I hold inconsistent values. Thus, any time I act on one or the other I am in danger of acting in bad faith. If my choices reflect my bias about the height of those that I interact with, then I am not assuming responsibility for my choosing also to value human equality. While consistency does not arise in Sartre's discussion of bad faith, I think that the concept implies a standard of consistency, for how can I freely acknowledge and take responsibility for my choices if I deceive myself about the values in which I am enacting upon? If I were entirely honest with myself I would have to confront my inconsistent values and choices.

I have explained the nature of bad faith in terms of Sartre's concepts, in-itself and for-itself, where an authentic person is in the mode of being for-themselves rather than feigning a mode of in-themselves as objects are in-themselves. I hope to have further clarified what it means to be in bad faith. I have argued that bad faith can be conceptualized as: 1) the denial of one's freedom and thus the denial of one's possibilities, 2) the denial of one's responsibility for one's choosing, 3) in respect to both 1 and 2, it is possible to conceive of bad faith as a matter of degree; the self-deception involved may be more in line with 1 than 2 or the contrary, thus it is possible for one to be partially inauthentic about an act or a choice. Further, inconsistency between choices may very well indicate choices made in bad faith.

Consider the Phil case from the above section on Heidegger: Phil has subjected himself to the everydayness of das-man. Suppose that Phil is very unsatisfied with his job, he does not like being stuck in an office all day interacting primarily with a computer screen. Suppose further that Phil is in bad faith; he is so enveloped in his work (which he does not like), that he neglects his passions and his possibilities to fulfill those passions. He goes home and dwells on the "fact" that he must be at work again in the morning. But it is no *fact* that he must be there, he *chooses* to be there. Perhaps he has very good reasons for choosing to be there. Still, he fails to acknowledge his existence as freedom, instead deceiving himself into the mode of the in-itself.[39] Phil must at the very least, acknowledge that his being what he *is*, is never just what he is. Further he must keep in mind that he *chooses his being* both in the present and in the future, for his future is always possibility. He deceives himself into believing that he *is* an office manager. In an understanding of bad faith, we come to realize a mode of being inauthentic toward one's freedom, possibility, and responsibility (i.e., one's existence).

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[39] Sartre's notion of lying to oneself is arguably problematic as he himself addresses, BN, 112-116. For more see Catalano, and Santoni.

CHAPTER 6

AN EXISTENTIALIST FOUNDATION FOR AUTHENTICITY

For both Heidegger and Sartre, authentic *being* has to do with one's existence as other than mere facticity. For our purposes, we can take from Heidegger that it is important to avoid becoming overly involved in everyday projects that are the projects of society rather than one's own authentic projects within that society. Heidegger's notion of society, or *the they* is particularly relevant, especially since Sartre does not himself frame human life in this context explicitly in terms of authenticity. Heidegger's notion of thrownness yields significant content for da-sein; da-sein always finds itself in a context. In the case of da-sein in the U.S., this context (among other things) is a patriarchal context. For both Heidegger and Sartre, humans exist as possibility, though for Sartre (and I take this to be very important) freedom plays a large role in terms of human existence. Human existence for Sartre *is freedom*, and I think that freedom entails a certain amount of responsibility for *becoming*. Human beings are always becoming their own essence, but perhaps too often we become what we think we are expected to become; that is, we fool ourselves into thinking that *we are* our place in society and nothing more; we forget that we have some choice in how we participate in society and what we value within society.

The existential aspect of authenticity will of course encompass the essential concepts of freedom and possibility. One cannot exist and persist authentically in the world without taking up the general project of freedom as possibility since human beings *are* freedom and possibility. To demand of anyone that freedom always be at the forefront of mind is likely far too much to ask. But in living an authentic life at large, one

must not wholly deny one's freedom to choose one's own essence. This is not a one-time choice, but an ongoing one. A further aspect of authenticity is entailed by not deceiving oneself about the necessity of one's projects.

Given our thrownness, part of our life projects will always be social, but we can still choose how we interact with our social world, which projects are worthwhile, which projects we choose to take up as our own, and perhaps most importantly, what we choose to contribute to the world we live in. Note that not all possibilities are equally available in a practical sense to all people, this is especially true in any case of oppression. My aim here is to suggest that feminism is the project of expanding the possibilities of the oppressed by acknowledging our freedom to choose our projects within our social world. On this front, we need to add something to the existentialist picture.

We have an existential foundation for a conception of authenticity which accommodates our existence as social beings. Through the examples of falling prey and bad faith we have gained some criteria for determining authenticity. From Heidegger, we see first that human beings are thrown into a context, which happens to be a social one. Heidegger's notion of the they, or das-man gives us a picture of what our social context looks like; society to some extent seeks to give human beings certain roles and projects which shape our everyday being in the world. From Sartre's notion of bad faith, we can frame Heidegger's conception of falling prey. Through examples of bad faith, we can see how a person becomes inauthentic within their social context. To be in bad faith is to deny one's existence as freedom. Both Heidegger and Sartre are concerned with the same idea regarding our social existence. Authenticity requires that one embrace one's freedom and assume responsibility for one's finite life project. To assume this responsibility is to

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choose projects and values based upon one's freedom rather than one's prescribed projects and social roles as if one were not a human being (existing as freedom), but a factical being. While this is a good starting point for developing a conception of authenticity, my own conception will add a content-relevant component to the existential conception. I will develop this component of authenticity from Simone De Beauvior's existentialist ethics.

CHAPTER 7

DE BEAUVOIR: ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENTIALISM

In *The Ambiguity of Ethics*, Simone De Beauvior highlights the ethical relevance

of existentialism. I will apply the ethical elements of De Beauvior's existential

philosophy to our existential conception of authenticity which we have already developed

from Heidegger and Sartre thus far. De Beauvior has her own language for discussing

various states of being that people may choose. Several of these states can be applied to

our scaler conception of authenticity. Going forward, my goal is to explain these states in

the terms of Heidegger and Sartre which we have discussed and developed up to this

point.

The first state of being is that of the "sub-man".[40] The sub-man can be compared

to a person who is in bad faith. The sub-man takes the conditions of her thrownness as

facticity, too *seriously*. Her projects are the projects of the world and society that she has

been thrown into; the sub-man takes these projects (which have been established prior to

her or his existence) as given facticity. De Beauvoir says, "Ethics is the triumph of

freedom over facticity, and the sub-man feels only the facticity of his existence."[41] She

goes on to say, "He loses himself in the object in order to annihilate his subjectivity."[42] In

the case of Sartre's waiter, or Phil the waiter, the waiter is in the state of the sub-man.

The waiter is in bad faith for all the reasons which we have established, and this

condition corresponds with the condition of the sub-man. Somewhere along the scale of

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[40] De Beauvior, EA, 45-49, 54-55.

[41] De Beauvoir, EA, 48.

[42] De Beauvior, EA, 49.

authenticity that I have proposed, a few more of De Beauvior's concepts can be applied. That of the nihilist, the adventurer, and the passionate.

Apart from the sub-man, the nihilist is closest to bad faith, and in De Beauvior's terms, the *sub-man* or the *serious*. The nihilist, instead of taking her thrown condition too seriously, takes her existence as nothingness too seriously.[43] That is, the nihilist recognizes that she exists as freedom, and thus rejects any given facticity or societally proscribed projects. The mistake of the nihilist is that this person does not take up the project of freedom, but rather embraces a role of *not being*. De Beauvior says,

> The fundamental fault of nihilist is that, challenging all given values, he does not find, beyond their ruin, the importance of that universal, absolute end which freedom itself is.[44]

Here we see the ethical implication of existentialism in De Beauvior's philosophy come forward. The ultimate goal of freedom for oneself and for others who also exist as freedom is a moral compass of sorts. To recognize existence as freedom and yet confine it into a mode of objectivity (i.e., the in-itself), is to fall back into a denial of existing as freedom, and thus a denial of oneself. According to De Beauvior, all values and significant projects are founded upon freedom.[45]

Unlike the nihilist who does not exercise her freedom, the adventurer recognizes her freedom and the possibility to choose and become. The adventurer embraces her own freedom, but does not wholly acknowledge human existence as freedom. That is, the

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[43] De Beauvior, EA, 56.

[44] De Beauvior, EA, 62.

[45] De Beauvoir, EA, 23.

adventurer makes the mistake of enforcing her own freedom against others'. For example, Hitler recognized and acted upon his freedom enough to drastically alter the situation that he was thrown into. However, Hitler failed to recognize freedom as an ultimate end (i.e., as an end for himself and for humanity at large). De Beauvior says of the adventurer,

> The man we call the adventurer, on the contrary, is one who remains indifferent to the content, that is, to the human meaning of action, who thinks he can assert his own existence without taking into account that of others.[46]

In terms of authenticity, the adventurer is to some degree in bad faith. The adventurer is not in bad faith regarding her own freedom or responsibility for choosing for herself, but instead fails to acknowledge the freedom of other human beings, and thus *human* existence as freedom. I have before mentioned that consistency within one's chosen values and projects is relevant within the scale of authenticity; the adventurer is not honest with herself about the equivalence of her own freedom with that of all other peoples'.

De Beauvior stresses that the content of the adventurer's projects fails to be genuine, while it is the *subjectivity* of the passionate person that is neglected.[47] The passionate are those who become engulfed in their own projects so much so that they become closed to possibilities outside of their project. Their project becomes an "absolute" rather than a possibility.[48] The passionate person may choose their values and their project without taking too *seriously* societies proscribed values and projects, but then becomes confined to their project and is subject to a being of the

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[46] De Beauvoir, EA, 65.

[47] De Beauvoir, EA, 68.

[48] Ibid.

in-itself. According to De Beauvoir, for a project to be existentially moral, it must entail freedom as its ultimate goal,

> An end is valid only by a return to the freedom which established it and which willed itself through this end. But this will implies that freedom is not to be engulfed in any goal; neither is it to dissipate itself vainly without aiming at a goal.[49]

The passionate person's project may contain existentially moral content, but the confinement of the in-itself attempts to escape freedom by way of deception. Passionate persons deceive themselves into believing that the ends of their projects are fixed and absolute.

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[49] De Beauvoir, EA, 75.

CHAPTER 8

AUTHENTICITY ON MORAL GROUND

With the consideration of De Beauvoir's existential ethics, we are able to

establish an ethically valuable conception of authenticity. On my view, a person is

authentic within their social context when they are socially involved in such a way as to

promote freedom and possibility for themselves and others. This alone may be

combatable with the existential picture that we get from Sartre and Heidegger. However,

on my view, the existential picture is missing a content oriented component which makes

authenticity an ethically valuable concept; De Beauvior's existential ethics will add this

content relevant component to the conception of authenticity established in this project.

The problem with the conception we have developed thus far, is that it leaves open the

possibility of *harmful* or counter-productive authentic projects. By Harmful, I have in

mind projects which are freely (regarding the criteria drawn from Sartre and Heidegger)

chosen, but which undermine the well-being and success of members of society, which is

counter-productive for human existence in general. Though there are some ethical

implications in Heidegger and Sartre[50], their views are susceptible to the criticism that

authentic being is a "content-neutral" state of being.[51] That is, the content of one's chosen

projects and values is unrestricted. If this is the case, then it is possible that one can

authentically take up a harmful project (e.g., the project of oppressing women).

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[50] For further reading on the ethical implications of Heidegger and Sartre, see respectively, Lawrence Vogel, *The Fragile "We": Ethical Implications of Heidegger's Being and Time*, (Northwestern University Press, 1994), and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer, (The University of Chicago Press1992).

[51] Marilyn Freidman uses the term "content-neutral" in her discussion of conceptions of autonomy. See, Marilyn Freidman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics*, (Oxford University Press).

In his book, *The Fragile "We": Ethical Implications of Heidegger's Being and Time*, Lawrence Vogel states that under one interpretation of Heidegger, to have a moral conscience is necessarily to fall prey to the moral conventions of society and thus to be inauthentic.[52] On this interpretation, to be immersed in the moral prescriptions of society and its expectations is to fall prey. Vogel says,

> The only thing I "know" in listening to the "silent call of conscience" is that I bear responsibility for what I make of the circumstances in which I find myself. The imperatives of moral conscience tempt me to be inauthentic because they promise to settle the issue of who I am to be by appeal to a given and impersonal measure.[53]

According to Heidegger, the "silent call of conscience" is in a sense the call toward authenticity, that is it speaks to the existence of Da-sein and its freedom. On the other hand, Heidegger discusses morality in terms of moral conscience which is dictated by the they or das-man. In his critical look at Heidegger's discussion of moral conscience, we see the dilemma for the existentialist conception of authenticity. Authenticity on this reading only asks that one embrace one's existence as freedom and assume responsibility for choices (whether those choices are good or bad by any measure). One can relinquish one's responsibility by submitting to the prescriptions (moral or other) of society and escape one's anxiety about freedom and finitude or one can embrace one's existence as freedom and assume responsibility for choosing what to value (i.e., what is good, bad, or other). Sartre's notion of bad faith is susceptible to this same criticism.

Through our examples of falling prey and bad faith we have seen that authenticity requires one to accept responsibility for one's existence as freedom. I propose that we

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[52] Vogel, 15-22.

[53] Vogel, 21.

add De Beauvoir's content-relevant amendment to this existentialist foundation for a conception of authenticity. This view will add to the existentialist conception that what one freely chooses to value may be either authentic or inauthentic. The criteria that will determine the authenticity of free choices will still be grounded in the existentialist concepts that we have discussed thus far, including those of De Beauvoir. Finally, with the concepts and criterial established thus far, we can examine the case of feminist authenticity.

CHAPTER 9

ON THE ROAD TO FEMINIST AUTHENTICITY

To be of a feminist mind involves a certain awareness of social context. I do not think that such an awareness alone will constitute feminist authenticity, but it may be required to be *authentically* feminist. Sandra Lee Bartky has a firm idea of what feminist awareness is in her conception of *feminist consciousness*.[54] According to Bartky, feminist consciousness arises when an agent becomes aware of the possibility of things being not as they are. A woman for example must become aware that her oppressed condition ought not to be the case, and further, that it does not *have* to be the case (i.e., it is possible that society be structured differently and/or she orient herself differently toward it). Once an agent reaches this conclusion, she is aware of her social condition in a different way. She becomes sensitive to ways in which things could be different for herself, and women in general. While an agent could perceive gender injustice and even have a distaste toward it, feminist consciousness is something more than that. Bartky says,

> Women have long lamented their condition, but lament, pure and simple, need not be an expression of feminist consciousness. As long as their situation is apprehended as natural, inevitable, and inescapable, women's consciousness of themselves, no matter how alive to insult and inferiority, is not yet feminist consciousness. This consciousness… emerges only when there exists a genuine possibility for the partial or total liberation of women.[55]

Feminist consciousness contains within itself a notion of escaping a particular condition which is oppressive rather than merely recognizing the condition as oppressive. My view

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[54] Sandra Bartky, "Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, (New York: Routledge, 1990). 11-21.

[55] Bartky, 14.

is that one cannot become authentically feminist without first reaching this sort of consciousness. As we have seen, authenticity requires an acceptance of existence as possibility. It is therefore a move *toward* authenticity to first become aware of possibility.

There are certain conflicting standards that one will become aware of at the point of reaching a feminist consciousness, and this awareness may result in feelings of anxiety about one's place in a patriarchal social context, Bartky says, "we understand what we are and where we are in the light of what we are not yet."[56] Feminist consciousness is consciousness of possibility, while *authentic* feminism is existence *as* possibility; feminist consciousness entails an awareness of other possibilities for women, this is important for authenticity as we have seen in earlier sections of the paper. The relevant possibility for the feminist to authentically strive for, is that of women not being oppressed within her society.

We might wonder what it means to become aware of one's oppression in a feminist way. I think that Marilyn Frye's defining of oppression picks up on these notions of conflicting standards and different possibilities. Frye targets within the word 'oppression', the word 'press', and from this she derives a very insightful and useful definition:

> Something pressed is something caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent the thing's motion or mobility. Mold. Immobilize. Reduce.[57]

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[56] Bartky, 15.

[57] Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1983), 2.

Working from this definition, feminist consciousness gains a focused awareness of what oppression actually does; oppression constrains and restricts one's possibilities. Oppression confines freedom. This awareness brings to light the idea that other conditions are possible, conditions which would yield further possibilities. From an existentialist standpoint, oppression restricts one's very *being* as *human*. Further, a firm grasping of this definition will bring light to various sorts of barriers, and conflicting standards within one's social condition, which is precisely what Bartky describes as feminist consciousness. I suspect that the conflict arises within feminist consciousness when one becomes also aware that many socially acceptable practices are not morally acceptable.

In an article on moral responsibility, Cheshire Calhoun draws a notable distinction between what she calls *normal moral contexts*, and *abnormal moral contexts*.[58] In a normal moral context, it is a rare exception that a member of a social community be unaware of any given social norm within that community; the relevant standards are well distributed throughout the community. In an abnormal moral context, there is some relevant standard that is not distributed throughout the community, and thus to be unaware of the particular standard or standards is the norm in that community.[59] I think that this distinction is useful in locating the conflicting predicament that one may find oneself in when coming into feminist consciousness. Feminist consciousness entails being aware that social standards are sometimes oppressing, and people continue to accept and perpetuate them. Given such an awareness, feminist consciousness finds itself

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[58] Cheshire Calhoun, "Responsibility and Reproach," *Ethics*, Vol. 99, No. 2, (January, 1989) 389-406.

[59] Calhoun, 394.

caught in-between two sorts of standards: the socially accepted standard, and the possibility of a morally acceptable standard in its place. I suggest that feminist consciousness is the realization of being in an abnormal moral context; those who have acquired a feminist consciousness are in an epistemic minority. That is, their awareness of a morally acceptable standard among genders is not the norm in their society. My suggestion is that an authentic feminist will take up the project of shifting an abnormal moral context into a normal one, where the possibility of gender equality is realized and the social norms reflect this equality. What then is the difference between the inauthentic feminist and the authentic feminist?

CHAPTER 10

THE INAUTHENTIC FEMINIST

While I take feminist consciousness to be necessary in becoming authentically feminist, bad faith is still possible within a mode of feminist consciousness. To not take up the project of exercising one's freedom in the face of oppression is to be *inauthentically* aware. Take an example: if Alice has recently come into a feminist conscious awareness of her oppression as a woman, she may still fail to take seriously her possibilities. She may fail to act upon the idea that things could be otherwise. Alice could deceive herself into a mode of being caught in a patriarchal web of constraints just as a candle wick is caught in a block of wax until it burns out. She submits to her thrown condition and allows her oppression to shape and restrain her *being*. We may even suppose that Alice consistently complains about her oppression; she says things like, "why do I have to paint my face every single day in order to make myself presentable?" But Alice applies her makeup each morning before work, prepares meals for her children before school while her husband reads the newspaper, and comes home to cook supper and clean the kitchen while her husband watches baseball. All the while, she complains as though she wishes things to be different. Still, she *does* nothing different, she does not take up different possibilities; she rejects her own freedom to choose. She falls prey to her social condition, and deceives herself into the mode of the in-itself.

Alice, despite having gained a feminist consciousness, is in bad faith in that she takes her existence and her role in the patriarchy as a given. She does not accept responsibility for her choosing to play that role, nor does she accept her freedom to choose otherwise. Further, recall Heidegger's conception of falling prey; Alice has fallen

prey to the social norms and roles given to her by patriarchal society. By all of the criteria we have highlighted above, Alice is inauthentic in regard to feminist being. Alice seeks to escape her own role in condition which she knows herself to be in. She fails to take responsibility for her continued involvement in her oppressed state of being. We have hereby answered our first question: Alice is the inauthentic feminist.

One might of course ask, what makes Alice a feminist at all? In a certain sense, she is a feminist in that she is thinking feminist thoughts. She discusses cases of unjust treatment between genders. Most importantly, she is aware of her oppressive condition and unsatisfied with the way things are. I am claiming that Alice has reached a state of feminist consciousness. She is differently aware of things that she once took as merely being *the way things are*. I will argue that feminist being requires feminist authenticity. If Alice, who has become conscious of her oppressed condition and who recognizes and opposes (in thought or in attitude) her condition is not a feminist, then it is because she is not *authentically feminist*. To be clear, it is not wholly important whether Alice is or is not a feminist, what is important, is that she is not an *authentic* feminist. In order to be an authentic feminist, Alice must take up responsibility for her freedom and the freedom of human beings (full stop). She must choose among her newly found possibilities (e.g. to not apply make up every day… or at all), and to be something other than what social patriarchy (*the they*) dictates that she be. She ought to be what she authentically chooses to be and embrace her existence as freedom. Instead, Alice hides behind her bad faith. Note that I am not claiming that make-up entails inauthenticity, rather Alice should embrace her freedom to not wear make-up in the case that she prefers a world in which she need not wear make-up.

Working backwards as Sartre has done with bad faith and authenticity, we can now frame the picture of the authentic feminist in contrast to Alice. The authentic feminist will take up her possibilities upon gaining a feminist consciousness. To use another example, suppose that Carol finds herself caught on the outskirts of patriarchal social context; she has become aware that her being oppressed is restricting her possibilities. Oppression threatens to confine her to a mode of being *in-itself*. Carol realizes that all along she has been acting and *being* according to what society dictates that she be, despite her existence as freedom. Carol, like Alice, has gained feminist consciousness.

Carol finds herself complaining about makeup and housework before and after work. Unlike Alice, Carol decides to wean herself off of makeup, and she plans a discussion with her husband about an even distribution of household upkeep and parental duties. Carol takes up her own possibilities which are not merely or at all the roles which society gives her. Carol moves to uproot such roles by defying those constraining barriers that she can. Carol further encourages others to become aware and responsible for their freedom, for this fosters the possibilities that feminist consciousness is aware of and ultimately fosters *freedom*; in this I adopt Vogel's view; Vogel claims that part of being authentic da-sein is to take up some extent of responsibility to others' freedom as well as to one's own freedom.[60] Further, we have seen in De Beauvoir that a true existential approach will carry with it the underlying goal of freedom for humanity. While it is not up to Carol to force others into a mode of accepting their own freedom and taking up

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[60] Vogel, 76-78.

their own possibilities, part of feminist movement is to bring about a change in social

context (i.e., a shift from an abnormal moral context to a normal one).

CHAPTER 11

THE AUTHENTIC OPPRESSOR?

Now that we have in mind a conception of an authentic feminist, it may still be worrisome that it is possible under our criteria that there also be an authentic oppressor. This is a troubling possibility as it would undermine any measure of value that we might expect a conception of authenticity to hold. Let us recount our criteria: the authentic agent accepts her existence as freedom, thereby accepting her existence as possibility and as being responsible for her freedom. The agent does not attempt to deceive herself about the nature of her condition, that is, she does not feign her existence as one of a given essence. She does not accept her place in society as lacking other possibilities. Finally, we have learned from De Beauvoir that that existentialism contains a content relevant value, and that value is freedom. It will then be important to keep in mind that this project is a case for a specific, existential conception of authenticity. The worry then, is that an oppressor can accept his existence as freedom, not be in bad faith about his place within the patriarchy, and not take his place within the patriarchy as a *given fact* about his being male. While it seems likely that most oppressors in fact are in bad faith to varying degrees, the possibility of the authentic oppressor is pressing.

The abnormal moral context of a patriarchy (abnormal from the perspective of the feminist) is full of "socially acceptable" oppressors. As Calhoun points out in her essay, many or perhaps most of these oppressors are everyday men, "the 'villains' are ordinary men, with ordinary characters, living out ordinary lives as husbands, scientists, ad

men…"[61] These men are in other respects, upstanding citizens of the community. Suppose however that there is a villainous oppressor. This oppressor is not a rapist or a murderer, he is a man with a typical character, and a typical job. Let us suppose that this oppressor is Philip. Perhaps Philip works with Carol. Everyday Philip comes into work, he shakes Jim's hand, gives Carol a hug, and compliments her dress. One day Philip comes in, shakes Jim's hand, turns to Carol and she puts out her hand as in invitation to shake. Philip becomes offended, and Carol explains to him that she prefers to be treated as a friendly business partner just as Jim is treated. Throughout the next few weeks, Philip notices that Carol has not been wearing makeup, and she often comes into the office in slacks and a button-down shirt. During lunch over these few weeks Carol points out various oppressive social practices and patriarchal standards/roles.

Suppose that Philip gains a feminist consciousness from his enlightening discussions with Carol. Philip realizes that his whole life he has been benefiting from patriarchal society at the detriment of women's freedom. Philip becomes aware that some of his own behaviors have been oppressive. But rather than considering his alternative ways of being toward others, he embraces his privileged role within the patriarchy. Philip decides that he likes reaping the benefits of his being a male in a male dominating society. If we suppose that Philip is not in bad faith about his possibilities of becoming other than an oppressor in his patriarchal context, then is he an authentic oppressor? I do not think that he is.

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[61] Calhoun, 390.

First, I think that it is all too likely that his choosing to be an oppressor is contradictory to some other value or values that he holds, which would put him in a form of bad faith. If this is the case, then he is not wholly authentic in regard to his oppressiveness. Second, by embracing the role of an oppressor in a patriarchal context, he chooses to be a *sincere* oppressor. Sincerity for Sartre is a particular form of bad faith. Sincerity is a form of admitting to oneself what one is but still denying what one is not and thus what one could be.[62] But a human being, *whose existence is freedom*, can never *be* what they *are*. This is because human beings are always freedom, they always *choose* and are never a given.[63] Philip admits to himself that he *is* an oppressor and embraces this role. But in choosing to remain an oppressor, Philip escapes a wide sense of being in bad faith, but condemns himself to a mode of mere sincerity which is not authenticity.

At this point, the importance of the content of one's values and projects becomes most relevant to determining authenticity. Let me explain how values can play a role in the existential picture that we have outlined so far. Recall that bad faith is a form of lying to oneself about the very nature of one's being. Ronald Santoni correctly points out a particular difficulty in Sartre's theory of bad faith. The difficulty lies in Sartre's phenomenology of consciousness, where consciousness is transparent to itself. That is, for Sartre there exists no double consciousness or otherwise put, sub-consciousness. If this is the case, then it seems quite impossible for a person to wholly conceal anything from oneself, as bad faith threatens to do. While Sartre is well aware of this difficulty in his depiction of bad faith as a lie to oneself, his response to the problem is anything but

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[62] Sartre, BN, 107-110.

[63] Sartre, BN, 96-105.

clear. Sartre says that bad faith hides from itself by not believing what one believes. He

further says, "bad faith does not succeed in believing what it wishes to believe".[64] Bad

faith must then persuade itself to believe something that it does not believe. Santoni

clarifies bad faith as being the acceptance of insufficient evidence,

> Because faith is not certainty, the consciousness of bad faith (or, "bad-faith consciousness") decides to be content with an insufficiency of evidence; to determine arbitrarily the amount of evidence by which it will be persuaded, while "knowing" that the amount it requires is not sufficient to persuade fully.[65]

Bad faith thus only succeeds in deceiving itself insofar as it chooses to believe a thing

about itself which it does not wholly accept. My point is that Philip can only authentically

be an oppressor if his acceptance of being an oppressor does not involve his concealing

any evidence to the contrary. Thus, understanding his existence as freedom and exerting

that freedom against the freedom of others is something of a contradiction. He is in some

manor denying existence as freedom. As such, Philip's lack of authenticity is very much

comparable to De Beauvoir's example of the adventurer. The adventurer too, seems to be

in a state of mere sincerity. Despite embracing his freedom to choose, he takes too

seriously the conditions and practices of the patriarchy and falls prey to those given

schemes. In this way, Philip does not genuinely embrace existence as freedom and all

things as possibility.

 If for example, Phil authentically (without accepting insufficient evidence for his

belief) believes that he is in excellent physical condition, he cannot also authentically

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[64] Sartre, BN, 115.

[65] Ronald Santoni, "Bad Faith and Lying to Oneself" in *Bad Faith, Good Faith, and Authenticity in Sartre's Early Philosophy*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 38-39.

believe his doctor when his doctor informs him that his blood pressure and cholesterol levels are too high. In order for Phil to be authentic in regard to his beliefs about his health and well-being, he must adjust one or the other of his beliefs in respect to a sufficient amount of supporting evidence and not take as an absolute his evidence for his physical health. Philip's physical health is not an absolute, and his choices may effect it. If Philip attempts to conceal from himself the evidence contrary to his belief that he is in excellent physical health, then he is in bad faith about his belief just as Phil in other cases which we have discussed is in bad faith about being condemned to eat burnt cookies or factically being an office manager. Likewise, if Philip authentically believes himself to be an oppressor, then he must not conceal from himself any evidence to the contrary.

My point is twofold: first, it is highly unlikely that a state of *being an oppressor* does not conflict with some authentically held value or another, such as the belief that a job well done deserves a fair rate of pay, second, and most importantly, the any oppressor who may even be questionably authentic in his projects and values, must value freedom. However, in the case that the oppressor does value freedom, she or he must be resisting evidence of existence generally as freedom for others. This point may seem like a reach, but it is not unfamiliar to the way that feminists often talk about sexism. It is no secret that sexist standards tend to take on a certain hypocritical or contradictory form.[66] Perhaps the most obvious example of such a contradictory standard is the case in which a man is paid more than a woman for the same work position. My point is ultimately that,

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[66] Many feminist philosophers have made use of sexist double standards and contradictory standards such as the "double bind", for specific accounts see, Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1983); Alison Bailey, "Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's Oppression," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 29, no. 3, (winter, 1998), 104-119; and Maria Lugones, "Structure and Anti-Structure: Agency under Oppression," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 88:10, (October, 1990).

to be an oppressor is almost inevitably to be in conflict with some value(s) or belief(s) that one holds, and thus one must be in bad faith about some belief in regard to authenticity on the matter. In this event, the agent is not authentic, though he or she may be *sincere* in their beliefs.

Even if we suppose that the oppressor does not hold any conflicting values which he conceals from himself in regard to his being an oppressor, he can only be *sincerely* so. Sincerity for Sartre does not conform to a common usage of the word. Since Sartre describes sincerity as a form of bad faith, sincerity serves as a denial of one's existence as freedom. Further, both modes of inauthenticity (bad faith and sincerity) confuse one's existence as being in-itself rather than for-itself. The difference lies in the free intention of the sincere agent; the sincere agent freely chooses to claim a mode of the in-itself, where the bad faith agent mistakes the mode of the in-itself as a given. Sartre's waiter is in bad faith because he takes his existence as a waiter as a given and therefore ignores alternative possibilities. Phil the oppressor acknowledges his freedom as well as his choices and freely assumes the role of the in-itself. The waiter does not admit to himself his free choice to be a waiter as the sincere oppressor admits of his choosing to be an oppressor. Still the oppressor is in bad faith because he resigns his freedom in favor of being merely what he is (an oppressor) without embracing his freedom as for-himself. A person, whose existence is freedom, cannot ever exist as being what it is. The oppressor cannot be an oppressor as the coffee pot is a coffee pot.

The most condemning evidence against the sincere oppressor, is that his values and projects wholly undermine freedom, which is existentially the most fundamental value of all authentic projects.

It could be likewise objected that the feminist cannot *be* a feminist as the coffee pot *is* a coffee pot. My response to this is that the oppressor cannot embrace freedom as the feminist embraces freedom (recall Fry's definition of oppression). The authentic feminist, contrary to the sincere oppressor and the inauthentic feminist, embraces freedom *as existence* in that she carries out a project which promotes freedom rather than constrains or limits it to the being of the in-itself. The authentic feminist's project is *necessarily* to be for-itself, since it seeks to broaden its possibilities and to embrace existence as freedom. The oppressor does no such thing whether sincere about his actions or not, as an oppressor and certainly as being an oppressor, freedom is avoided or otherwise denied which is to be in bad faith.

It is worth mentioning that my interpretation of Sartre on sincerity is not uncontroversial. Some Sartrean scholars have located a problem of equivocation between his notions of *bad faith* and *sincerity*. Joseph Catalano takes a more forgiving interpretation (as I have done above) though he only treats the point in a footnote.[67] Ronald Santoni has argued that sincerity must be a form of authenticity rather than a form of bad faith.[68] While I think that Sartre's text does arguably back up my own interpretation, as Sartre himself explicitly says that sincerity is a form of bad faith,that argument cannot be shown here. For now, suffice it to say, if we as human beings are never merely what we *are* (as a paperknife is merely a paperknife), then any claim to be that thing (full stop) is a claim born from bad faith. What distinguishes bad faith from

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[67] Joseph Catalano, "Successfully Lying to Oneself: A Sartrean Perspective," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 50, no. 4, (June, 1990), 673-693.

[68] Ronald Santoni, *Bad Faith, Good Faith, and Authenticity in Sartre's Early Philosophy*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 1-27.

sincerity is the amount of evidence which grounds the relevant belief in question. In the case of bad faith, as we have discussed, the evidence is insufficient for authentically holding the belief. On the other hand, in the case of sincerity, the evidence is well grounded by choices and actions, yet still intentionally avoids freedom and possibility for being what one is not and not being what one is and further from De Beauvoir we can see that freedom must be the end game as well.

Finally, one might ask about the "innocent" oppressor who means well, but nevertheless conducts oppressive behaviors. I think that this case is more easily handled than the Philip oppressor case above, but certainly a more commonly found, concrete example which makes it pressing in and of itself. The innocent oppressor must be in bad faith, in regard to his oppressiveness. The innocent oppressor does not see his behavior for what it is. This is certainly true of most any oppressor in the case that the oppressor exists in an abnormal moral context where only those with a feminist consciousness are aware of certain oppressive norms. If he becomes aware of what his behavior is, then he may enter a phase of sincerity or possibly even feminist consciousness, but he must take up his own project in accord with freedom and newly informed values in order to achieve feminist authenticity.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

The aim of this project is to establish a working definition of feminist authenticity. Given this existentialist definition, I have argued for a response to the two questions stated in the opening paragraph. First, I have identified an example of what an inauthentic feminist might look like. Second, I have argued that neither the self-appointed oppressor, nor the "innocent" oppressor is authentic regarding a feminist domain of authenticity. The authentic feminist has gained a feminist consciousness and embraces existence as freedom. Given these two things, she takes up the project of promoting the freedom and possibilities of people in general. This project is not a project regarding the discovery of who one truly is (since a person's existence precedes their essence), it is a project of enacting one's freedom within society for the betterment of human possibility.

The resulting definition of feminist authenticity is first and foremost existentialist. The existentialist conception is capable of capturing the social nature of human existence and human projects. Since existentialism contains the fundamental theme of human existence as freedom, we learn from De Beauvoir that the moral content of existentialist concepts must be founded upon the goal of freedom. Thus, I have argued that certain feminist projects are authentic since they are founded upon the goal of freedom (against the oppression of freedom). Feminist authenticity entails the responsibility for choosing freedom as its end. Note that there may be many different cases of inauthentic feminist projects such as any radical movements which in any way seek to restrain the freedom of others. Finally, I hope that this project may bring light to the possibilities of many other types of authentic projects.

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