

Although they conceive of it differently, both Freud and Sartre acknowledge the existence of a dualism within the Self. With the help of Jacques Lacan's reinterpretation of Freudian theory, I will demonstrate that Freud and Sartre are actually addressing this same psychological phenomenon in their respective theories of repression and Bad Faith. Sartre himself describes Freud's topographic model of the mind in his attempt to explain how a duality of consciousness might be possible. However, Sartre is not satisfied with Freud's psychoanalytic explanation for the dualism of mind that he sees manifested in the attitude of Bad Faith. In fact Sartre believes that the premise of the unconscious, on which Freud's theory of repression is based, is itself founded on such shaky ground that it is thus an inadequate standpoint from which to gain insight into the paradox of a psychological duality. Furthermore, Sartre finds that Freudian terminology is flawed inasmuch as it determines the individual as a passive, mechanistic creature at the mercy of the conflict between their unconscious wishes and the internalized social mores of civilization. Despite such arguments, by taking into account a Lacanian death drive theory along with aspects of Dr. R. D. Laing's 'Existential-Phenomenological' approach in psychiatry, I will demonstrate that it is not impossible to reconcile the concept of an unconscious with Sartre's insistence upon autonomous human agency.

In Being and Nothingness<sup>1</sup>, Sartre's search for an understanding of the nature of human consciousness leads him to postulate the notion of Bad Faith with which consciousness affects itself. He asserts that we are in Bad Faith inasmuch as we seem to be capable of deceiving ourselves of the truth of a given situation, either internal or external. An act of deceit requires that there be a duality of 'deceiver' and 'deceived', so that the truth can be known to the liar but unknown to the lied-to. Sartre then also points out a distinction between types of falsehood. The difference between 'cynicism' and 'good faith', he suggests, is that the cynical liar is conscious of not telling the truth and thus he is aware of what the truth in fact *is*, whereas the person in good faith is aware that he *may* be lying, but such a lie would be unintentional, since he *believes* that he is telling the truth. Sartre's conception of Bad Faith arises from the observation that there is a third way to lie, which is neither as blatant as cynicism nor as innocent as good faith. Here we must determine precisely what Sartre means by Bad Faith as well as why it is seen to arise in the lie to oneself and yet not in the situation of the cynical lie.

According to Sartre, our consciousness is affected with Bad Faith when we are in denial of a truth of which we are aware. The cynical liar, as previously described, is aware that he is not telling the truth and chooses to do so purposefully. Precisely because the cynic is lying to an ignorant 'other' he does not need to deny the truth to *himself* in order to posit a falsehood as being true. It is only in a deception of the Self, for which the truth must be at once known *and* denied by a single consciousness, that Sartre finds the phenomenon of Bad Faith. The lie to oneself implies that there be a deceiver and a deceived within one individual, but, as Sartre rightly asks, how can the Self's singular, unified consciousness both know the truth and not know it at the same time? This enigmatic problem of 'Self-deception' is the basis for Freudian Psychoanalytic theory in its implication of a duality within individual consciousness. We shall see

that Freud seems already to have given us a model with which to answer this dilemma of a 'unified duality'. However, it is Sartre's opinion that even when we entertain the Freudian precept of unconscious repression, which implies the division between the conscious "Ego" and the unconscious "Id", we continue to be at a loss for an essential explanation of Self-deception.

Freud proposed the existence of the unconscious in order to account for information that was uncovered in the minds of his patients through his 'talking analysis'. This information had previously been completely unknown to the patient and the result of bringing it to the fore was that often their neurotic or hysterical symptoms were alleviated. Freud concluded the presence of a tension between what he proposed to be conscious and unconscious realms of the mind, with a barrier between them that censors the unconscious material as being either too painful or unacceptable to be made conscious. In Freud's model, the mental realm of these unconscious truths is termed the "Id" and that of regular consciousness is called the "Ego". The forces, or instinctual drives, which arise from the Id are constantly vying for conscious manifestation, while an 'outgrowth' of the Ego, the "Superego", attempts to find ways, through such means as sublimation, for these drives to be satisfied in accordance with the social and/or moral limitations that have been internalized in childhood and are thereafter enforced within the Ego by the Superego. The theory of repression is therefore the theory of the dynamics between these three aspects of the mind, specifically with regards to the censoring of the forces of the Id<sup>2</sup>.

It would seem that Freud has hereby explained the structure of the mind in such a way as to account for the duality implied by our ability to keep truths from ourselves. Sartre at first acknowledges this, but then goes on to criticize Freud's model on several interrelated counts, demonstrating that, inasmuch as the model appears to hinge on questionable assumptions, not only does it circumvent the dilemma of Bad Faith but it ultimately fails to convince him of the very existence of the structural dualism which it seeks to describe. Because Sartre asserts that "All knowing is consciousness of knowing", he is led primarily to ask:

How could the censor discern the impulses needing to be repressed without being conscious of discerning them? How can we conceive of a knowledge which is ignorant of itself? (p.93)

Having raised this question, we are forced to realize that Freud gives no concrete explanation of the means by which the proposed mental elements interact with one another. In fact, we are supposed to accept that although they are able to have direct impact on each other they are themselves isolated entities, without awareness of their own agency or the other's effects upon them. If one proposes that the censor alone is consciously aware of the contents of the unconscious then one wonders, as Sartre does, how this awareness might be able to be hidden from the rest of Ego consciousness? Furthermore, Sartre points out that the unconscious Id forces, which are capable of 'tricking' the censor and entering consciousness through various means, must necessarily be aware of themselves as having been

repressed in order to conceive of ways to transcend that repression. Even if it were possible for the Ego to be ignorant of the censor's knowledge and subsequent choices, and for the Self-awareness of the Id to be somehow separate from the rest of the conscious mind, the phenomenon of Bad Faith would remain a dilemma within this proposed censor itself, due to the fact that its very nature would consist of a consciousness that affects itself with Bad Faith by denying a truth of which it is aware.

Sartre has apparently dismantled the effectiveness of a Freudian explanation for the nature and existence of Bad Faith. Having found that repression merely localizes the Self-deception within the censor, Sartre abandons psychoanalytic terminology altogether. In an attempt to demonstrate that it is possible to conceive of an attitude of Bad Faith without the assertion of an unconscious, Sartre gives us a convincing example of how one might interpret a case of frigidity as other than a result of Freudian repression. He quotes the Viennese psychiatrist Stekel as saying:

Every time that I have been able to carry my investigations far enough, I have established that the crux of the psychosis was conscious (p.95).

Sartre's example, taken from Stekel's case reports, is of women who have become frigid as a result of marital infidelity. It became evident to Stekel that, although they would deny it, these women were in fact fully aware of the pleasure that their bodies were experiencing. Stekel concluded that they had consciously chosen to negate their pleasure and distract themselves from it by concentrating on thoughts which were not at all sexual in nature, such as household tasks, and so on. This *distraction* from the truth of a situation would seem to be a means by which one could consciously create a duality of purpose within the Self. It seems that, over time, acting in contradiction to a truth of which one is aware would cause one to identify more with the falsehood than with the truth. It could then be said that one had managed consciously to deceive oneself and thus that, rather than being the 'victim' of unconscious repression, one's consciousness had purposefully affected itself with Bad Faith.

In Freud's essay "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death"<sup>3</sup>, he describes the social precept for repression as a cause of hypocrisy. Such hypocrisy results from the very duality, whether achieved by the agency of the censor or by conscious Self-distraction, which is manifest in the expectation that people live in denial of the truth of their "unconscious" instincts. Freud states:

It is undeniable that our contemporary civilization favours the production of this form of hypocrisy...One might venture to say that it is built up on such hypocrisy, and that it would have to submit to far-reaching modifications if people were to undertake to live in accordance with psychological truth (p.72).

In spite of Sartre's disagreement with Freud on where within the consciousness one would locate a Self-deceiving duality, there is obviously a consensus between them concerning the existence of such a duality and its result in the

hypocritical attitude which Freud calls repression and Sartre calls Bad Faith. Because Freud locates this dualism in the function of the censor to repress the unconscious from the conscious, he views the consequent hypocrisy as intrinsic to man's situation as a social being. Sartre, on the other hand, having rejected the theory of the unconscious and instead located the dualism in the conscious mind, views Bad Faith as a hypocrisy which is not socially conditioned but is instead a product of the existential ontology of human consciousness. Sartre proposes that human beings are defined by their actions and therefore by the choices which determine and motivate those actions. Once we have made our choice and acted upon it, we have limited ourselves to "being" that action and no other. Even if we choose not to choose, we have still made a choice which defines us. Because there is no single, ultimate Truth which would remove for us the ambiguity of our potential choices, we are limitless until we choose our own limits. This is the burden of Freedom that causes us to suffer from existential anxiety. How do we know that we have chosen "correctly"? How can we allow ourselves to be defined and limited by the choices we make?

Sartre maintains that the ontology of human consciousness requires that a dualism of the Self be established in order that we may continue to perceive ourselves as limitless and indefinable regardless of what actions we have chosen to take in the world. In constituting ourselves through action, Sartre believes we are already more than this action because of our awareness of our potential to have chosen otherwise, or to 'become' otherwise in the future. In our state of Self-awareness we are capable of passively observing our own body as an object among others, and thus the Self that is objectively aware of itself can transcend its own manifested identity. Such a dualism allows us to transcend our factual "being-in-the-world" because we are able to identify ourselves, in Sartre's words, "as a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is" (p.100). Sartre finds in Bad Faith:

...a certain art of forming contradictory concepts which unite in themselves both an idea and the negation of that idea. The basic concept which is thus engendered utilizes the double property of the human being, who is at once a *facticity* and a *transcendence* (p.98).

This paradoxical aspect of consciousness involves a negation of Being; a 'Self-destructive' urge that may be the same tendency observed by Freud and which he termed the "death drive". Freud's background in biology colored much of his theorizing and therefore, in my opinion, in order to make a comprehensive comparison of the concepts of repression and Bad Faith, it is helpful to turn to the more philosophical interpretation of Freud that is offered by Jacques Lacan. Lacan proposes that what Freud had found in the phenomenon of the death drive was not actually a drive toward physical death, as Freud had interpreted it, but is evidence instead of an unconscious desire to destroy the limiting boundaries within which the Imaginary (Ego) has constituted itself<sup>4</sup>. I would suggest that, looked at in this way, the death drive is comparable to Sartre's notion of the desire to 'transcend our facticity'.

Lacan essentially renames the aspects of Freud's triadic model as follows: The "Real" corresponds to the Id, the "Imaginary" to the Ego, and the "Symbolic" to the Superego. According to Lacan, Freud's theory of how these elements interact became confused in his attempt to conceive of them as biological structures, as opposed to energetic forces which counterbalance each other. Lacan asserts that the delineation of the Imaginary (Ego) begins in early childhood, in what he calls the "mirror stage", when the individual forms a mental Gestalt of bodily wholeness by firstly identifying with those around them and secondly by internalizing the image of their own reflection in the mirror. This process of creating a Self-identity is an ongoing one that requires constant choices about what IS me and what is NOT me. Perception is determined by a readiness to accept what is given. Believing is seeing, not the other way around. By excluding from our Self-defined world various elements and forces of the reality from which we select, we separate ourselves from the realm of Otherness which constitutes the Real. The Real is therefore the unknown, the unimaginable, the negation of the Self in non-Being. One might be tempted to say that the Real is the content of the unconscious and that we have merely circled back to the problem Sartre had with the censor. As we have seen, however, the issue of whether or not the unconscious exists became irrelevant to the problem of psychological duality once we determined that consciousness itself can simultaneously consist in both Being and non-Being while nevertheless denying this duplicity.

Because everything that we are is like an echo of what we are not, it follows that we should find ourselves driven toward encompassing as much of the excluded Real as possible in order to continuously redefine ourselves as transcendent of our own facticity. Because we become reified within the limiting boundaries of the Imaginary, it is only in striving for the 'death' of the Imaginary that we can perceive our Being as evanescent and thereby inclusive of our non-Being. The Symbolic is the realm through which the Real can be accessed, although always indirectly through sublimations by the Superego. The cultural symbol-system of language, for example, is of a nature that evokes for us the negative, or opposite, implied by the meaning of each word. Every word derives its meaning from all other words which it is NOT. In Sartrean terms, the Being of the word stands out as the figure against the ground of its non-Being. Once we have taken into account a Lacanian reconstruction of Freud's model, we are able to understand the death drive as an existential need to constantly destroy the Gestalt of the Self and reestablish newly expanded boundaries of the Imaginary, or Ego-identity. Although Freud's valiant attempt to mechanize the ineffable quality of human consciousness appears to have hindered his understanding of the nature of our paradoxical dualism, it is obvious that his theory of repression resulted from his having encountered the phenomenological effects of the human situation inherent in this drive toward non-Being. This phenomenon is precisely in accordance with Sartre's finding that we are driven, albeit in a conscious attitude of Bad Faith, to challenge with negation any definition of our Being which threatens to limit us and rob us of our sense of freedom.

We are now in a position to consider the relevance of Dr. R. D. Laing's Existential-Phenomenological approach to the issue of the duality of consciousness<sup>5</sup>. As we will observe, Laing's theory supports a hypothesis that the

subjective psychological reality of ontological anxiety, which results in part from the burden of free choice and action, is sufficient to instigate a split in Self-identity. Laing's methodology is based on the Humanist idea that both the 'patient' and the 'doctor' must recognize each other's unique personhood and existential situation in relationship to one another and to each other's subjective ways of being-in-the-world. Rather than viewing the patient as an abstracted Ego-consciousness that is at the mercy of the unconscious censor and the doctor's objective interpretations of their presenting symptoms, Laing believes it is essential that the psychological wholeness and autonomy of the patient be acknowledged in order for a healing relationship to be established. Laing asks:

How can we speak in any way adequately of the relationship between me and you in terms of the interaction of one mental apparatus with another? How, even, can we say what it means to hide something from oneself or to deceive oneself in terms of barriers between one part of a mental apparatus and another? This difficulty faces not only classical Freudian metapsychology but equally any theory that begins with man or a part of man abstracted from his relation with the other in his world (p.19).

In the Laingian model, the so-called 'mentally disturbed' are not suffering from the conflicts arising from unconscious repression, as much as they are engaged in an active 'splitting' of their consciousness, which creates the duality of what are referred to as the 'True' Self and the 'False' Self. In Laing's experience, such a "schizoid" condition is not necessarily one of insanity, since it occurs also in those of us who are considered to be sane (p.17). Laing sees the split condition of the schizoid mind as resulting from the individual's unwillingness or inability to take full responsibility for their own existential freedom and to recognize and claim their own agency within themselves and in the world of others.

Like Sartre, Laing recognizes that Classical Psychoanalytic language and method keep the subject from being seen as a person with their own power of agency. He asserts:

The most serious objection to the technical vocabulary currently used to describe psychiatric patients is that it consists of words which split man up verbally...Instead of the original bond of *I* and *you*, we take a single man in isolation and conceptualize his various aspects into 'the ego', 'the superego', and 'the id'...How can we speak in any way adequately of the relationship between me and you in terms of the interaction of one mental apparatus with another? (p.19).

In the existential situation of "basic ontological insecurity", which Laing discusses as a factor in such cases (p.39), one experiences augmented anxiety concerning the implications of one's Being and non-Being, particularly in regards to one's relationship to others. Laing believes that the initial relationship with the first 'other' in our world determines the solidity of the foundation upon which is built our integrity of Selfhood and any sense of the outside world as stable and

reliable. Without this basic ontological security, we lack the fundamental sense of ourselves and others as valuing or valuable, trusting or trustworthy, autonomous or effectual. Consequently, there are attempts made to defend the Self from anxieties arising from the subjectively threatening experience of being-in-the-world. Laing holds that the neurotic symptoms in which ontological anxieties often manifest cannot adequately be explained as defenses against the threat of repressed libidinal urges, as Freud would propose (p.57). Laing, in fact, sees symptoms not only as attempts at unconscious gratification, but also as conscious defenses against existential anxiety and as efforts to gain a sense of ontological security.

Thus we see that Laing's conception of the True/False Self split is compatible with the explanations of the dualism of the Self offered by both Lacan's interpretation of the death drive and Sartre's theory of Bad Faith. In describing the case of Mrs. D., for instance, Laing points out that:

The frustration she experienced with me, which called out intense hatred of me, was not fully to be explained by the frustration of libidinal or aggressive drives...but rather it was...the existential frustration that arose out of the fact that...I did not tell her what she was to be...imposing upon her the necessity to make her own decision about the person she was to become (p.59).

The demand on Mrs. D., that she take responsibility for her own existential facticity, is both a cause of further anxiety as well as a potential cure for her schizoid condition. Laing explains, of individuals in the split-Self position, that there is a schism in their consciousness between the fantasy world of the inner/True Self and the reality of the outer world in which, in order to maintain what I propose is a Sartrean sense of transcendence, action is only taken by the external/False Self. As Laing observes:

It can readily be understood why the schizoid individual so abhors action as characterized by Hegel. The act is 'simple, determinate, universal'. But his self wishes to be complex, indeterminate, and unique. The act is 'what can be said of it'. But he must *never* be what can be said of him. He must remain always ungraspable, elusive, transcendent (p.88).

I would thus assert that here we are seeing the same duality of the Self which Sartre refers to in his notion of Bad Faith. In Bad Faith, as in the schizoid position, the individual denies the dual facets of their consciousness by alternately distracting themselves from either their facticity or transcendence. However unfortunate the fact may be for those who lack a basic ontological security, it appears that human consciousness, because it is Self-conscious, has the capacity and the need to deceive itself in order to avoid the anxiety inherent in accepting ontological freedom and the responsibility that follows from it. This splitting of consciousness, as we have now understood it, is a choice made in

Bad Faith and a refusal to embrace the Lacanian death drive, but it is not a censorship through unconscious repression.

As is evidenced by the lack of recognition of psychological integrity and agency in the Freudian theory of repression, we human beings appear to have difficulty acknowledging the paradoxical duality of ourselves as inclusive of a 'gray area' that unites the polarities of our True and False Selves, of our facticity and transcendence, of the Real and the Imaginary, and of the conscious and the unconscious. I am inclined to believe that we are each a unified whole, which may include what Freud referred to as conscious and unconscious realms, but which is not split-up by these into isolated conflicting agencies. The conscious subject is not merely the Ego that is the puppet of unconscious motivations, nor are we only the Id that finds itself limited by the boundaries of the Imaginary identity. In his Introduction to Sartre's Existential Psychoanalysis<sup>6</sup>, Rollo May writes that:

Sartre's unshakeable conviction is that the human being simply cannot be understood at all if we see in him only what our study of sub-human forms of life permits us to see, or if we reduce him to naturalistic or mechanical determinisms, or fragmentize him into separate instincts or sets of stimuli and response, or in any other way take away from the man we try to study his ultimate freedom and individual responsibility (p.9).

Perhaps In the leap of good faith which is demanded for the existential "Courage to Be"<sup>7</sup>, it might be possible for us to overcome the Self-deception of Bad Faith and to claim our own autonomous agency by appreciating that our conscious and unconscious are not separate entities but are merely shades of awareness on a continuum of Selfhood. If this is true, then the Freudian censor is a fiction which only defends us against the fact that, in whatever terminology one chooses to frame it, we are necessarily and creatively both Being and non-Being simultaneously.

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<sup>1</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. Hazel E. Barnes, Transl., Washington Square Press, New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> See Freud's 'spatial analogy' in Introductory Lectures PFL Vol.1. J. Strachey and A. Richards, Eds. London, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991.

<sup>3</sup> In Civilization, Society and Religion PFL Vol.12. A. Dickson, Ed., J. Strachey, Gen. Ed. London, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Lacan's hypothesis, and the summary of his theory that follows, found in Boothby, R. Death and Desire. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1991.

<sup>5</sup> In Laing, R.D. The Divided Self. London, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Introduction by Rollo May, © Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1962. In Sartre, Jean-Paul Existential Psychoanalysis. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway Editions, 1988 (© Philosophical Library, Inc., 1981).

<sup>7</sup> This concept is owed to Tillich, Paul The Courage To Be. London, England: Yale University Press, 1980.