

Handout Glossary:

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980): Wall-eyed, Existentialist philosopher; playwright, novelist; gloomy chap, but very influential, esp. in mid-century café scenes.
Being And Nothingness: title of his main work. Largely boring.

metastable: liable to spontaneous change, volatile, fluctuating – in this case between being and nothingness.

nothingness: consciousness as no-thing-ness and that which brings negation into the world, ie, allows us to think or see negation, and say not (eg, imagine things otherwise than they are, eg: this inkwell is not Elle McPherson, etc).

being-for-itself: human consciousness as a relational mode of being, ie, relating oneself to oneself in self-awareness; transcending oneself in freedom and becoming; aware of choice and possibility; standing back to question brute being (no response); etc.

being-in-itself: an inkwell (ie, brute things that lack consciousness, we suppose).

bad faith: kind of dishonesty, self-deception. Self-deception is rather puzzling, no? playing – something I like to do; quite good fun; has a certain charm.

Kant (1724-1804): German philosopher who lived his life like clockwork. Asked good questions though, of the form: What are the conditions of the possibility of...

Postmodernism: dominant philosophy last 30 years; long-winded, convoluted, endless theorising about the impossibility of theorising.

closure: people on TV seem to want this regarding emotional issues, but in

Postmodernism is regarded as a no-no: better keep things open to revision, etc.

Pyrrhonian Sceptics (after Pyrrho 360-270 BC): “Nothing can be known, not even this”, “The opposite is also true.” – etc. School flourished to 3rd century AD.

Via negativa, via positiva: negative/positive way; used a lot in theology and cooking. (My cooking is said to be a negative way, for example.)

facticity: factual physical and historical circumstances of my being-in-the-world.

transcendence: capacity of consciousness to question and surpass being-in-itself – eg, being something more elusive and noble than an inkwell.

waiter: garçon in a café. Butt of many comedy sketches, eg, played by John Cleese.

consciousness: a mode of being that-is-what-it-is-not-and-is-not-what-it-is. (And not just when you wake up on a Sunday morning after a night of hard drinking.)

Hegel (1770-1831): German philosopher. Opaque. Mostly harmless. However, Schopenhauer thought he belonged in a madhouse.

Hegelian kiss: said to be a dialectical technique in which the kiss incorporates its own antithetical kiss, forming a synthetical kiss. But there's no synthetical kiss in Sartre.

Shakespeare (1564-1616): wrote some good plays and verses. Might catch on.

What Might Come After Postmodernism?

Here's a thought-experiment. Let's explore the idea that human consciousness is a metastable interplay between being and not being, believing and not believing.

Though I had not thought of Sartre in a long while, the idea reminded me of him. For it seems similar to the characterisation of human consciousness he presents in *Being And Nothingness*, particularly in his chapter on *Bad Faith*.ⁱ So I had a look at that again. His account is intriguing, though rather negative in tone. I'd like to counterbalance his play on the negative in the interplay of consciousness by playing up the more positive aspects. It may help us explain how the general phenomenon of human playing is possible – eg, how children can play so easily at cops and robbers, or how an actor can play at being Hamlet, or how audiences can play at believing in the reality of the play unfolding on stage when they also know at the same time that it is not real, or how the player in a relatively trivial game can nevertheless play the game as if it had great importance. In other words, it may help elucidate the “as if” phenomena in human life that involve elements of pretending – and, we may note, not always in a “bad” sense.

Let's raise this Kantian-sounding question: What are the conditions of the possibility of the phenomenon of human playing and pretending? The suggestion is that what conditions the possibility of the phenomenon is the ongoing metastable interplay of consciousness between being and not being, believing and not believing.

In what way has Postmodernism added to our understanding of this phenomenon? It has helped to highlight for us how this interplay of consciousness is influenced by the differential play of signs in semiotic systems, especially words in a cultural language or in paradigm language-games – much along the lines suggested by such writers as, eg, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida, and Baudrillard. Postmodernism has focussed on how this factor of linguistic structuring and differential play makes it impossible to establish a final decision – closure – on such key philosophical terms as truth, knowledge, proof, power, value, and meaning: for the criteria for and meaning of these key terms is said to be culturally and historically relative and shifting in an evolving way. Accordingly, the tendency in postmodernity has been relativistic and deconstructive, even nihilistic and auto-destructive – as Baudrillard, among others, claimsⁱⁱ – a corrosive criticism undermining the very foundations of all theory and knowledge, an “antifoundationalism” that undermines every foundation, even its own in the long run.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. However, if one were to focus attention exclusively on the negative, highlighting and attempting to consolidate only its critical and nihilistic effects, there is a sense in which it could be rather debilitating or depressing or even incapacitating – as many these days complain. At an extreme it

could perhaps make human life impossible. For if postmodern theory declares everything problematic, unfounded, and undecidable, still, something has to get decided all the same if there is to be purposive human thought and action in the world. For this presupposes some kind of transcendental framing – that is, some kind of being and believing – even although it takes us well beyond proof.

On the other hand, looking on the bright side, one can see how the postmodern demise of fixated truth can have a liberating effect, viz., in that it can free us up to be more playful, creative, artistic, and positive in our beliefs. If there is to be something “after Postmodernism” – after this onslaught of critical theory – it will have to be something that plays up the factor of creative belief while at the same time fully taking into account the preceding critical play of the auto-destruction of theory.ⁱⁱⁱ

If we say that human consciousness is an ongoing metastable interplay between being and not being, believing and not believing, then the recurring sceptical movements in the history of philosophy from Socrates and the ancient Greek Pyrrhonian sceptics to the postmoderns tend to play up the negative or nihilistic side of the interplay: ie, the philosophical “via negativa”, as it were, which attends more to non-being and non-believing – or to “the suspension” of being and believing. Meanwhile, rationalist metaphysicians and other master-builders and believers, tend to play up the positive or constructive side: the philosophical “via positiva”, as it were, which attends more to being and believing – or to “the fixation” of being and believing. However, overall the situation is not simply one side or the other. Rather, it is the ongoing metastable interplay of the two: hence an interplay in human consciousness of being and not being, believing and not believing, the condition of the possibility of the general phenomenon of human playing and pretending (eg, theatre, games, sports, etc).

So, after these opening remarks, let’s now consider in a little more detail what Sartre says in his text about bad faith. This will help us elucidate this relational interplay by way of a couple of his famous examples.

Sartre writes that when we say a person shows signs of bad faith we mean that he lies to himself in some sense: it implies some kind of self-deception.^{iv} But self-deception is a rather puzzling phenomenon. It is simple enough to explain how one can lie to another person, for we are two different minds. But to lie to oneself implies that one knows the truth of that which one is lying to oneself about, and even knows that one is lying to oneself about it. As Sartre says, “I must know in my capacity as deceiver the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived. Better yet I must know the truth very exactly in order to conceal it more carefully – and this not at two different moments, which at a pinch would allow us to re-establish a semblance of duality – but in the unitary structure of a single project.”^v

He writes, “Take the example of a woman who has consented to go out with a particular man for the first time. She knows very well the intentions which the man who is speaking to her cherishes regarding her. She knows also that it will be necessary sooner or later for her to make a decision. But she does not want to realise the urgency; she concerns herself only with what is respectful and discreet in the

attitude of her companion. She does not apprehend this conduct as an attempt to achieve what we call “the first approach”...if he says to her, “I find you so attractive!” she disarms this phrase of its sexual background...She is profoundly aware of the desire which she inspires, but the desire cruel and naked would humiliate and horrify her. Yet she would find no charm in a respect which would be only respect...But then suppose he takes her hand. This act of her companion risks changing the situation by calling for an immediate decision. To leave the hand there is to consent in herself to flirt, to engage herself. To withdraw it is to break the troubled and unstable harmony which gives the hour its charm. The aim is to postpone the moment of decision as long as possible. We know what happens next; the young woman leaves her hand there, but she does not notice that she is leaving it. She does not notice because it happens by chance that she is at this moment all intellect. She draws her companion up to the most lofty regions of sentimental speculation; she speaks of Life, of her life, she shows herself in her essential aspect – a personality, a consciousness. And during this time the divorce of the body from the soul is accomplished; the hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion – neither consenting nor resisting – a thing.”

Sartre wants to say the young woman is in bad faith for...”she permits herself to enjoy his desire to the extent that she will apprehend it as not being what it is...while sensing profoundly the presence of her own body...she realises herself as not being her own body, and she contemplates it as though from above as a passive object to which events can happen but which can neither provoke them nor avoid them because all its possibilities are outside of it.” And he says, “It is a certain art of forming contradictory concepts which unite in themselves both an idea and the negation of that idea...it utilizes the double property of the human being, who is at once a facticity and a transcendence.”^{vi} By facticity he means that we have a certain bodily and historical being-in-the-world, and by transcendence he means that we cannot be reduced to this being in the way in which, say, an inkwell simply is an inkwell. For we put our being in question, and separate from and surpass ourselves, in relating ourselves to ourselves. We are, to use his jargon, a “being-for-itself”, a self-surpassing relational mode of being, rather than a “being-in-itself”, an inert thing, which simply is what it is at any time. We carry within ourselves this capacity to “negate” our being.

This metastable combination of facticity/transcendence is one kind of double-mindedness that enables bad faith. He goes on to mention another: the combination of being-for-itself and being-for-others. He writes: “Let us consider this waiter in the café. 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 easily; his voice, his eyes, express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally, there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All his behaviour seems to us a game...He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at being a waiter in a café.” Likewise, there is also “the dance of the grocer, of

the tailor, or the auctioneer, by which they endeavour to persuade their clientele that they are nothing but a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor.”

Meanwhile, “...from within, the waiter in the café cannot be immediately a café waiter in the sense that this inkwell is an inkwell.” Rather, if I am trying to be a waiter then this is something I “have to be” and so am not. “I cannot be he, I can only play at being him.” So Sartre says, “In vain do I fulfil the functions of a café waiter. I can be he only in the neutralised mode, as the actor is Hamlet, by mechanically making the typical gestures of my state...as if from the very fact that I sustain this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side...Yet there is no doubt that I am in a sense a café waiter...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.”^{vii} This is so even if a waiter is all I am for others. Being-for-itself, being-in-itself, and being-for-others never coincide. “On all sides I escape being and yet – I am.”^{viii} – which then leads to Sartre’s famous paradox: that the human consciousness is a being that is what it is not, and is not what it is.^{ix} It is this duplicity that enables “bad faith” and all “as if” behaviour.

Perhaps even more intriguing is that his analysis even applies to the emotions. He writes, “I am sad. One might think that surely I am the sadness in the mode of being what I am.” But not so. The sadness is rather an adoption of certain meanings, attitudes, and conducts, and consciousness “affects itself” with these “as a magical recourse” such that we must say, according to Sartre, that “being sad means first to make oneself sad”. And then I need to continue to re-create it, much as I need to re-create my being-for-others as a café waiter. But if that is so, and I make myself sad, then it must be because I am also not sad, just as I am also not a waiter. Sartre writes, “If I make myself sad, it is because I am not sad – the being of the sadness escapes me by and in the very act by which I affect myself with it.”^x The “sadness” then stands as the self-created “regulative meaning” of my attitudes and conduct, but not as my being itself. Thus it remains that if I am sad, I am sad in the mode of not being sad while being sad, much as I am a waiter in the mode of not being a waiter while being one. Even our emotions are a form of duplicity that turn on our ability to thoroughly play a part while also not being the part we play.

It seems our minds are such that we have a capacity to be fully focussed on one thing – the object of a play or performance – and so have it at the forefront of our attention, while we are nevertheless aware of its very opposite in the background of our attention (which you’d think would cancel the other, yet it doesn’t). In this way an actor can play being Hamlet in the mode of not being Hamlet. And the young woman can play transcendence in the mode of being a body of desire in the world. And the waiter can play being a waiter for others in the mode of transcending this in himself. And the sad person can play being sad in the mode of not being sad – that is, by having sadness as an apparent given in the foreground of attention while ignoring making-himself-sad by having this in the background of attention. It seems, then, that we are never what we are and a goal of perfect coincidence with ourselves is impossible. This will be because we are not simply a being-in-itself but a relational mode of being: the kind of being that relates itself to itself and so is separated from itself by that non-thing or negation we call consciousness.

In the final section on bad faith Sartre talks about belief, or the faith of bad faith. Suppose we start with the assumption that there is some simple immediate belief in good faith – eg, I believe in good faith that Pierre likes me. Sartre proceeds: “Hegel would demonstrate at once that the immediate calls for mediation and that belief, by becoming belief for itself passes to the state of non-belief. If I believe that my friend Pierre likes me, this means that his friendship appears to me as the meaning of all his acts. But if I know that I believe, the belief appears to me as pure subjective determination...to believe is to know that one believes, and to know that one believes is no longer to believe.”^{xi} That is, belief appears now as merely a belief, hence subjective opinion, hence fully exposed to doubt and disbelief. So Sartre says, in his characteristically paradoxical way: “To believe is not-to-believe.” This means then that the ideal of good faith (of simply “believing what one believes”) is, like the ideal of sincerity (of “being what one is”) a false one for us. It is an ideal of being-in-itself, which is precisely what a human being isn’t.

How is it possible to believe when one’s belief contains the awareness of unbelief? Again, this can be possible in the same way it is possible to be both transcendence and facticity at the same time, or to be a café waiter and not be a café waiter at the same time, or be sad and not be sad at the same time: it turns on the play of attention and where it lies. In believing we focus our attention solely on the content of belief and what we understand it implies or requires of us, while doubt and disbelief lie in the background of awareness. On the other hand, in disbelieving the factor of doubt comes fully to the foreground of attention and the elements of belief in the disbelief (the presuppositions of scepticism) fall away into the background. We can never simply believe or disbelieve any more than we can simply be or not be. In this way, then, both believing and being, and disbelieving and not being, are functions of insincerity and pretence: ways of behaving as-if.

So, in sum, it does indeed seem that consciousness is a metastable interplay between being and not being, believing and not believing.

Now, let’s relate all this to the title of our talk. Suppose we were to appropriate the lessons of 20th century Existentialism and Postmodernism to seek a way forward into the 21st century. What might come after them? What seems likely? If we accept that human consciousness is an interplay of being and not being, believing and not believing, and if the tendency in the 20th century has been mainly to play up and consolidate the negative side – eg, nonconformist existential and postmodern scepticism, disbelief, deconstruction, auto-destruction, nihilism, emptiness, etc – what seems likely is that there will now be a counter-reaction to this of trying again to play up and consolidate the positive: the side of stable being and conformity in believing. The rise of various fundamentalisms lately on the global scene may be a sign of this happening. There is a tendency to re-introduce some authoritarian dichotomies of old: of absolute good and evil, truth and falsity, religion versus religion, science versus religion, religion versus science, and so forth, in the way of a new crusade.

On the other hand, if we learn the lessons of history, we might come to an awareness that it is contrary to the metastable nature of consciousness to rest for long in either

one side or the other. If this is so, then perhaps the wisest thing to do is to acknowledge and become comfortable with the metastable interplay itself. That is: get in harmony with human life in the world as a kind of playing and pretending.

It's a double game: a matter of living in the interplay between being something and not being anything – a flickering between being and nothingness. With this in mind, recall now Hamlet's famous either/or – the most famous question in the history of playing: "To be or not to be". Maybe the proper reply to this riddle is: to be and not to be – the opposites held together but, somewhat paradoxically, not mediated in a higher synthesis. It is this interplay, after all, that allows us to be players playing in this or that theatre of the world.

Unlike Sartre, I am disinclined to call metastable play in itself "bad faith". He seems to me too quick to label the conduct of the woman or the waiter something "bad" – especially considering it is what enables her to maintain "the charm of the hour" and him to do his job with panache. The operations seem benign. So I'd rather say that "living in bad faith" is where we fall into a more persistent pattern of attempting to stabilise on one side while occluding and excluding the other – which would be in effect to live in denial of the interplay, trying to end it: for example, by absorbing ourselves into simply being, say, a husband or wife, or a waiter, or a teacher, or Christian, or atheist, or scientific materialist, or a success, or a failure, or a good lover, or this or that ego or self-identity with this or that set character, etc – thus labelling and defining oneself in some such term. But whatever label we try to pin on ourself (to pin oneself down) we transcend in consciousness of the possibility not being that anymore – which is our questioning awareness of what simply is as such and the possibility of change in the openness of human becoming.

Alternatively, we might fall into a pattern of trying to be absorbed on the other side – eg, dissolved without remainder into freedom, or doubt, or transcendence, living in dissociation or retreat from the world, in nothingness or emptiness or disbelief, living in denial that we have any beliefs, conditioning, history, social role or self to be, or physical illness or death to face – or, in short, any facticity, any being-in-the-world. Overall then: it seems we are a being-in-the-world and yet are also not of it: for we can't properly stabilise in sincere disbelief, nothingness, or not being, nor yet stabilise in sincere belief and simple being.

This revision of Sartre permits us to say we are not in bad faith if we play and pretend in an intentionally episodic way – as when, for example, the actor is playing at being Hamlet, or when we in the audience are playing at "suspending disbelief" to enter into the spirit, emotion, and action of the play. If there is a self-deception at work here, it is a relatively benign self-deception by which we maintain "the charm of the hour". Nevertheless, this playing has the same basic structure as Sartre's cases: for here one part of the mind is aware that the action on stage is not real – that Ophelia has not really died, for example – and yet we are somehow able to ignore this, focus our attention on the drama, and pretend to ourselves that she has died, that we may feel sadness accordingly. And yet, we must do this without really believing she has died, or that people are really fighting with swords on stage – otherwise we might rush out and call the police. What we seem to be engaging in is a

kind of make-believe, a play of belief that has, remarkably enough, all the enchantment of its intended emotional effect. And yet we do not fall into the bad faith of finally believing in something: for we can, after all, easily return ourselves to the attitude of disbelief – so switch from suspending disbelief to suspending belief, and vice versa.

Thus: we avoid bad faith if we suspend disbelief to enter into a spirit of belief understood as a play of belief, while we also play upon our ability to return ourselves from belief to a play of disbelief. Living in epistemological bad faith, on the contrary, is living either a pattern of dogmatic or fixated believing (whether religious, modern, scientific, materialist, etc) or a pattern of dogmatic or fixated deconstruction or scepticism – Socratic, postmodern, or otherwise. This epistemological situation has its ontological equivalent: for in the playing up of belief there is a play of being and self-identity, while in suspending belief we play up the non-identity of transcendence and non-being – emptiness and nothingness. Living a pattern of being-in-the-world in denial of non-being and transcendence, or living a pattern of non-being and transcendence in denial of being-in-the-world, would then constitute living in bad faith, ontologically speaking. Further, we may note that, if human consciousness is metastable in this way, then to live in denial of the interplay – in the bad faith of being and believing or in the bad faith of non-being and non-believing – may be construed as a kind of existential neurosis.

Perhaps we can say then that after Existentialism and Postmodernism there is a chance we may break free from living in the neurosis of bad faith – hence be more “authentic”, if we define this as: living truer to the nature of consciousness as a dynamic between being and nothingness. What might come after Existentialism and Postmodernism is this authenticity: a willingness to engage in the flux of consciousness that enables life to become a play of being and nothingness and the world a kind of theatre. In short: all the world becomes a stage and we become the players – which sounds, of course, just like Mr. Shakespeare.

However, we have also learned from Postmodernism about reflexivity: how critical theory reflects back on itself to bite its own tail. So I’ll raise the question now before someone else does: Am I playing and pretending now in saying this? In light of the argument it seems I cannot simply be a philosopher of playing and pretending but am playing and pretending at being a philosopher of playing and pretending. That is, I cannot simply coincide with being this speaker, this philosopher as such – a type of Existentialist, let’s say – or living this philosophy fully: not merely in the sense that one is never 100% philosophical all the time but has many moments of fallibility or distraction or engagement with other interests, but in the deeper sense that one cannot ever simply be this or that, or believe this or that. One is always transcending what one is or has been in the flux and openness of becoming. That is why there is an old motto: Become what you are! Yet it is an ideal that one can never attain in the world, because we could only fully be what we are when we are dead. Therefore, the living ego – even of a philosopher – is always a kind of fragile thing, a veil or mask, a persona: the person one is and also is not.

In his negative way, Sartre might conclude this means there is a bad insincerity about us all. For it seems we are always engaged in some form of self-deception. This seems so: for if there is any authenticity at all it is merely the authenticity of acknowledging the insincerity. More paradoxically still, the authenticity lies in acknowledging the inauthenticity in trying to be authentic when we can't be anything! The authentic self, in other words, is another metastable mask. If so, then human life is a series of self-deceptions and self-deception is unavoidable. If so, then the only question is whether we let self-deception congeal into the more troublesome and neurotic patterns of bad faith, or engage in the relatively more free and benign episodic self-deceptions that enable human playing generally and the art and enchantment that goes with it. We just need to get in harmony with the play and "play out the play" (Henry IV, Pt 1, Act 2, Sc 1.) For none of us really exist as such. We are only flirting with existence. But flirtation has its charms. We can flirt with being and we can flirt with nothingness.

We can even flirt with authenticity. In this mode we are neither fully absorbed in being a being (such as simply being our self pragmatically busy in the world) nor fully absorbed in non-being (aware only of emptiness, as happens in the deep stillness of meditation). Rather, we are aware of being this-or-that in the mode of not being this-or-that while being this-or-that – or in other words, one is aware of oneself as if being this-or-that. One is acting in the world as if you are yourself – as if you are a given person with identity and beliefs. (I often find I act as if I am Robert Miller.) In as-if playing there lies awareness of an insubstantiality at the core of our being-in-the-world: for I am not who I am, and yet I am it too, only not as an inkwell is an inkwell. I surpass myself in self-awareness toward a transcendence that is an opening onto the strangely strange nature of human being-for-itself being-in-the-world: strange in a strange way, in that we live as if we are someone or something when we are also not. Consciousness appears now as an as-if performance of being: an art of everyday theatre. Human life is the round of the grand illusion: a self-deceptive pretend-being haunted by nothingness. That's no doubt why Shakespeare often refers to the "airy insubstantiality" of life as a kind of theatrical ruse of masks and ploys and counter masks and ploys: such stuff as dreams are made on.

When one first comes across it, this is deeply disturbing – anguishing, Sartre would say. Some would say dreadful. That, however, is surely because, a) one is still unwilling to let go of one's traditional truths, solid realities, pragmatic comforts, and naïve assurances of simple being and believing; and b) because one is holding the nothingness at bay, at arm's length, as it were, while fighting against it as if one was a separate being from it. But one is not a separate being from it if it is inherent to consciousness. It is implied in humanness: in being-for-itself. Hence, one lives in bad faith if one lives in denial of this nothingness or any of its cognates: insubstantiality, transcendence, freedom, becoming, death, etc. The strangeness of pretend-being is inherent to us, not some alien intrusion we can fight against. Fighting it in fear and trembling not only puts us into bad faith but also reinforces and increases the fearfulness. So, realising this, one may begin to cease fighting. In psychological terms we may put it thus: if we embrace our shadow, the shadow of nothingness, it ceases to be so frightening.

As we embrace our authentic human situation it acquires a more positive feel to it. After all, there is a charm and enchantment of the theatre: a playacting beauty of pretend-being in the play and counter-play of posited or staged illusions and self-deceptions. It is like a living art form that we are in and that we are. We may begin to appreciate the theatre as theatre if we learn how to let go of the yearning for old-style being and believing and get more in tune with a post-Postmodern playing of pretend being and believing. There is a rich aesthetic vein to mine here. And one does not need to go anywhere special to mine it: for it is inherent to humanness and it is there for us all the time if we just look into it. To mine this vein, one would just live more authentically, i.e., more often exercising the awareness of the interplay of being and non-being, belief and non-belief. One would relinquish the “spirit of seriousness” (to use Sartre’s phrase) that characterises bad faith – eg, thinking that you know who or what you are, or even that you are. We would be more aware of the insubstantial substance of our metastable being-in-the-world and so live in the theatrical beauty of human life, marvelling at the vast variety of human pretences of being and believing – which are really quite a performance. And – contrary to gloomy old Sartre who himself seemed to suffer from a heavy dose of the spirit of seriousness – do feel free to choose a happy performance over an unhappy one!

Finally, to sum up: After Postmodernism, we might leave behind living in the existentially neurotic one-dimensional seriousness of the old patterns of bad faith typical of pre-modernity, modernity, and postmodernity, and replace them with an aware interplay of being and nothingness in an ongoing series of relatively benign self-deceptions for their art and charm. Let us enjoy the theatre as theatre, and gaze on in curious wonder at the make-believe beauties of pretend being – of playing being a self-in-the-world, since we must be this self, but in the mode of not being it. Let us enjoy the re-enchantment of the play and interplay as we play out the play and pretend to exist. Who knows? – Maybe some day we will.

ⁱ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being And Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, Washington Square Press, 1956. Part 1, Chapter 2.

ⁱⁱ Jean Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live: selected interviews*, edited by Mike Gane, Routledge, London, 1993a., pg 202.

ⁱⁱⁱ Something of the sort has been suggested: notably by Baudrillard. He introduces the notion of pataphysics and theory-fiction. By pataphysics he means a way of thinking that sets up a transcendental framing, not as a truth-claim – that is, in the manner of old-style physics or metaphysics – but rather as what is, openly and admittedly, “an imaginary solution”, as he puts it. Or, as he puts it elsewhere, as a “theory-fiction” – that is, a theory that is as much fiction as theory, as much theory as fiction, and whose truth or falsity remains equivocal.

^{iv} Sartre, *ibid*, pg 87.

^v Sartre, *ibid*, pg 89.

^{vi} Sartre, *ibid*, pg 97-98.

^{vii} Sartre, *ibid*, pg 102-103.

^{viii} Sartre, *ibid*, pg 103.

^{ix} Sartre, *ibid*, pg 105 and 116.

^x Sartre, *ibid*, pg 104.

^{xi} Sartre, *ibid*, pg 114