

Anxiety of Performativity and Anxiety of Performance: *Self-Evaluation as Bad Faith*

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ABSTRACT

Self-evaluation, a devolved, rigorous form of teacher inspection, has increasingly been promoted in educational circles as a way to balance both teacher autonomy and accountability. Such balancing acts help to alleviate anxiety around inspection, for the teacher who would otherwise face a visit from an inspector, and for the public who are concerned about self-evaluation being less objective. Using the Irish policy of self-evaluation, this paper will first explore the evidence-based approaches and the appropriation of a 'language of evaluation' that are inherent to so-called low-stakes accountability systems. In part, such mechanisms are used in order to alleviate anxiety. The anxiety that self-evaluation focuses on, however, corresponds only to aspects of teaching that are conducive to measurement, and therefore refers solely to what may be called an *anxiety of performativity*. Furthermore, its attempts to repress an *anxiety of performativity* ironically fails to acknowledge a more fundamental form of anxiety that teaching as a 'performance' involves. Using Sartre's idea of 'bad faith', this paper will ultimately argue that teaching inevitably involves an element of anxiety that should not be repressed but rather should be lived and worked with well, something which self-evaluation in its current form fails to capture.

Key words: Self-Evaluation, Performativity, Anxiety, Bad Faith

Self-Evaluation in Ireland: Balancing Autonomy and Accountability

In recent years, there has been a growing trend to adopt a so-called combination approach in the inspection of teaching and schools. This approach has been invariably labelled across different contexts as 'responsive regulation' (Hislop, 2012), 'robust evaluation' (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008), 'intelligent accountability' (Miliband, 2004), 'smart regulation' (MacBeath, 1999; 2006) or indeed, simply 'self-evaluation.' Although differing in specifics, the main sentiment across these terms is often the same: that the most effective way to evaluate the practice of teaching is to use a balanced approach of external inspection and internal review. For the purposes of this paper, I will be focussing primarily on the context of the Republic of Ireland¹, but parallel examples can be found elsewhere (e.g. Nevo, 2002; MacBeath 2006; Lindgren, 2014).

¹ After a lengthy period of sporadic inspections, the Republic of Ireland introduced a more internal-focused self-evaluation in the late 1990s for a variety of reasons. This emphasis on internal review has resulted in the minimising of the role of the external inspector to an advisor of sorts, whose role is mainly to ensure that the

In the context of Ireland, two main dimensions may be subject to self-evaluation procedures, namely the dimension of teaching and learning and the dimension of leadership and management. So far, much of the focus has been on teaching since this is explicitly considered as having the greatest impact on the learning of students (DES, 2016a; 2016b). Unlike the more high-stakes forms of inspection, self-evaluation has adopted what is sometimes labelled a more ‘cautious’ approach (McNamara and O’Hara, 2012). Indeed, since self-evaluation invariably holds the entire school to account as opposed to individual teachers, it may be considered a ‘low-stakes accountability’ system. Yet, its influence on the broader culture of teaching is unmistakable. Indeed, as examined below, the various profiles of effectiveness against which individual teachers’ practices are measured, albeit in less punitive ways than seen elsewhere, have certainly impacted upon the ways in which both teachers and schools understand the acts of teaching and the teachers’ roles in the classroom.

One of the key elements of self-evaluation is the balancing of accountability and autonomy in the process of teacher inspection. Self-evaluation allows, on the one hand, for an increased level of freedom for teachers and schools to evaluate and implement their own development. At the same time, there is also an increased level of responsibility for their judgements on the quality of teaching and learning, and the actions that follow. In this sense, self-evaluation can appease individual teachers, the school, as well as the wider public, as was alluded to by the Chief Inspector of Ireland, Harold Hislop, who stated in 2012 that:

‘... what is inevitable, is that any move to grant greater autonomy and decision-making powers to schools is likely to have to be balanced by greater public scrutiny of the work of school leaders, teachers, boards of management and school patrons.’

As a result, evidence becomes a crucial factor in the process of self-evaluation, something which is continually emphasised throughout the main body of Irish policy literature. As outlined in both the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines* (DES, 2016a) and *Looking at Our Schools* (DES, 2016b), the frameworks used for both internal and external evaluation, for any practice that is evaluated, there needs to be accompanying evidence to ensure that (a) the issue identified is serious enough to warrant attention and (b) that some indication of (an attempt at) improvement is measured. This emphasis on evidence has partly come about due to various criticisms of self-evaluation being a ‘soft option’, an option that would be less daunting than the more punitive forms of external inspection (McNamara & O’Hara, 2008; 2012).

Although undertaken by the school as a whole, a high level of responsibility rests on individual teachers to pursue their own self-reflective practice, the focus of which is of specific interest

process of self-evaluation is being undertaken in a rigorous and evidence-based way (See: McNamara & O’Hara 2012; Coolahan and O’Donovan, 2009).

to us here. And in self-evaluation, the evaluator’s task is quite systematic and robust, as we can see from the diagram below, taken from the *Guidelines* (DES, 2016a, p.11).

Figure 1: Self-Evaluation Process, taken from the Self-Evaluation Guidelines (DES, 2016a, p.11).



Let us consider the process through a somewhat familiar example focused on the area of teachers’ individual practice. Say the teacher has had to deal with a particularly rowdy class. She decides to focus her self-evaluation practices on this, and begins to gather evidence to demonstrate some of the difficulties she is having. Perhaps she wants to think about the ways in which she and the students interact with one another, so she starts to record some of the exchanges that take place. Or maybe she decides to keep a log of the time that is lost through disruptiveness, and what kinds of methods she employs to reduce it.² These forms of data may come in useful at a later stage when she attempts to judge whether any measurable improvement has been achieved since, as is recommended by the Department of Education (2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b), any targets for improvement set by the teacher should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. These judgements will later feed into the wider self-evaluation processes as a whole. In the meantime, the teacher analyses the data with reference to the ‘statements of (highly) effective practice’ as outlined in both self-evaluation frameworks as follows:

² Both of these forms of evidence are recommended by prominent self-evaluation proponent, John MacBeath (1999) as well as the Department of Education (2014a; 2014b).

Figure 2: Example of Teacher’s Standards, Statements of Effective Practice and Statements of Highly Effective Practice, taken from *Looking at Our Schools* (DES, 2016b, p. 17)

DOMAIN 3: TEACHERS’ INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
The teacher has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills	Teachers have the required professional qualifications and have engaged in a range of continuing professional development (CPD).	Teachers have the required professional qualifications and have engaged in a range of continuing professional development (CPD) relevant to students’ learning.
	Teachers create an inclusive, orderly, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust.	Teachers create an inclusive, orderly, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust, in which students regulate and monitor their own behaviour.
	Teachers have high expectations of students’ work and behaviour, and communicate these expectations effectively to students.	Teachers have high expectations of students’ work and behaviour, communicate these expectations effectively to students, and facilitate students in internalising them.
	Teachers demonstrate competence and proficiency in the skills and knowledge of their subject areas.	Teachers demonstrate competence and proficiency in the skills and knowledge of their subject areas, and can link these to other areas across and beyond the curriculum.
	Teachers demonstrate competence and proficiency in the pedagogical skills required in their subject area.	Teachers demonstrate competence and proficiency in the pedagogical skills required in their subject area, and for developing students’ learning across and beyond the curriculum.
	Teachers, through their own enthusiasm for and enjoyment of their subject area, motivate students to engage in and enjoy their learning.	Teachers model enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning, and thereby create a learning environment where students are self-motivated to engage in, extend and enjoy their learning.

From this, she can gauge, with a good degree of certainty, what an effective classroom environment looks like, and how it compares with what happens in her own classroom. This ‘gauging of practice’ is essential, since without ‘measure[ing] yourself against statements of significantly strong practice, you won’t be able to ask “How are we doing?” and, more importantly, “What should we be doing in order to improve?”’ (DES, 2013a). Afterwards, the teacher, in conjunction with the school, can set broader targets for improvement, which are defined by DES (2013b) as ‘a quantifiable change in performance level to be attained within a specific time, [and] should be expressed in terms of improved outcomes and attainments’, without which one could not know if such targets had been achieved. These targets are written in a ‘concise’ and ‘user-friendly’ (DES, 2016a, p. 40) report³ disseminated to relevant stakeholders, and are consistently monitored, re-evaluated and re-measured for the duration of their implementation. The Department of Education clearly agrees that this principled emphasis on measurement is key, since:

³ This report must contain specific targets, following the SMART acronym, which ‘may not be measurable in a quantitative or numeric way, but they should be capable of being measured in a way which can show whether the desired improvements have been achieved.’ (DES, 2016a, p. 41).

‘...learning how to measure what you value is essential if you are to experience a sense of pride in the real, measurable progress made.’ (DES, 2013a).⁴

In the next section of this paper, I will pay specific attention to the emphasis on evidence and objectivity in the process of self-evaluation. In particular, I will explore how this focus serves an unspoken purpose of self-evaluation, namely, the quelling of anxieties around inspections. I wish to eventually draw attention to two kinds of anxiety that are not explicitly addressed in the policy of self-evaluation, namely the *anxiety of performativity* and the *anxiety of performance*. Ultimately, I will argue that self-evaluation, whilst perhaps noble in its endeavour, merely functions to aggravate *performative anxiety* through its repression of an *anxiety of performance* which is central to understanding what it means to be a teacher. In this sense, self-evaluation is an example of the Sartrean notion of ‘bad faith’.

Self-Evaluation and the Quelling of Anxiety

It is worth noting that when self-evaluation was attempted in England, a context that has long since had a reputation for more accountability-focused modes of inspection, one of the criticisms raised was that the act of self-evaluation had become an act of self-inspection, where the teacher was merely forced to emulate the role of the inspector, and thus little else had changed in the actual operation of teacher appraisal (MacBeath, 2006). Whilst similar criticisms had been levelled in the Irish context, it seems that the shift and balance in inspection practices had ultimately been welcomed as a positive alternative to what had been happening in England (McNamara and O’Hara, 2008; 2012).

One explanation for this is that, in order to avoid industrial disputes and to maintain the sanctity of the educational sphere, the Department of Education was forced to take on a more ‘cautious’ approach (McNamara and O’Hara, 2008; 2012). There may be some level of truth to this – given that when it was first being considered and piloted, when external inspections were still a major part of the process, there was much resistance on behalf of teacher trade unions, many of whom openly refused to teach in front of an inspector (The Irish Times, 1999). According to McNamara and O’Hara (2008, p. 54), the initial self-evaluation project in particular ‘was designed with enormous care and the language used was intended to allay suspicions that judgements were to be made or the work of individual teachers criticised.’ Since then, policy literature has seemingly attempted to neutralise some of these anxieties with the emphasis shifting more towards the central role of the teacher and the school in self-evaluation, as well as a downplaying of the significance of the external reviewer.

⁴ There is certainly an air of *verificationism*, in this line of thinking – that any judgement of teaching must involve measurable evidence if it is to be considered accurate or robust. From this, one might surmise that the teacher *must* use evidence-based approaches if her judgements are to be ‘objectively’ assured, and this is not only so that she can understand her own practices in this more measurable format, but also so that the wider public can remain *reliably* informed on what is happening in the classroom.

In light of this, self-evaluation is not only promoted as something which can reduce teacher resistance to evaluation more broadly (Nevo, 2002), but also as that which raises the levels of trust towards the teaching profession from the wider public, since its evidence-based approach does not allow for partial judgement (DES, 2016a; 2016b). Through inculcating a capacity-building and developmental approach, and through training teachers in the art of data collection and analysis necessary for such procedures, self-evaluation ultimately empowers teachers and schools to be more objective and more efficient in the evaluation of their own practices (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008), and thus, they, and the wider public, no longer need to be concerned about their ability to do so effectively. Indeed, one might argue that this quelling of anxiety is one of the primary purposes of self-evaluation – of the teacher, the school and of the public, albeit in different ways.

According to the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines*, the statements of (highly) effective practice are not merely standards against which teachers and schools can evaluate their classroom practice, they also provide ‘a language for discussing what is working well and what needs to be improved’ (DES, 2016a, p. 22). Through ‘the development of a common language when dealing with self-evaluation’, it is argued, there is the possibility to ‘transcend the terminological difficulties which almost inevitably emerge whenever individuals working in different educational settings begin to communicate.’

The *Guidelines*, however minimal in terms of educational jargon, certainly contain a number of important terms (‘targets’, ‘outcomes’, ‘(highly) effective practice’, ‘measurable improvement’). Crucially, such terms have become ingrained in the ways we speak about teaching more broadly. In ‘enframing’⁵ the practice of teaching in this terminological sense, it ensures everyone is on the same page, that everyone has access to the discussion around what teachers should (and should not) be doing in the classroom, and anxieties can thus be further alleviated through ensuring that what is said is verifiable and consistent, as well as translatable and, by extension, accessible. Indeed, by following the directives indicated in the frameworks for self-evaluation, the possibilities of what can be discussed is subtly and gradually constrained. Similarly, the possibilities of what can be thought of as effective or not, what should be focused on in terms of teaching and learning, and how to go about measuring this so that such areas can be checked and verified, is, indeed, affected directly by what exists in the framework itself.⁶ In other words, such frameworks and the processes of self-evaluation that spring from them encroach upon the very ways in which teaching as a broader activity can be understood. Whilst on paper self-evaluation appears to be sensitive to varying voices within the school community, including that of teachers and learners, the ‘language of evaluation’ and the focus on evidence that it initiates both teachers and schools into, and the possibilities of dialogue and the triangulation of views that arise from this, means that the very idea of what being a teacher actually entails is *already* moulded as a result.

⁵ For a more thorough understanding of this, see Heidegger’s (1954) usage of the term in “A Question Concerning Technology”.

⁶ Evidence of this ‘enframing’ can be seen in the more recent examples of self-evaluation reports released by schools which have been made publically available on the Department for Education website.

Nevertheless, aiming to minimise as much as possible the anxieties that teaching often accompanies, either from the public or the teacher himself, seems to be a noble idea. And yet, one might wonder to what extent this is really helpful in fully capturing the act of teaching, or to what extent it fails to do so. In order to consider this further, it might be useful to think about what kind of anxiety is being reduced here, and what kind of anxiety, as I will later argue is, in fact, irreducible.

Performativity vs. Performance Anxiety

There are two kinds of anxiety at stake here that go beyond the teacher/school/public distinction, and indeed, beyond the mechanisms of self-evaluation. Let us consider this on the level of the individual teacher, but a similar argument might be extended when thinking about the institutional self of the school. In one sense, the individual teacher is anxious about how she will be viewed in the eyes of the public and her colleagues, perhaps made manifest in her concern over the outcomes of her pupils, in terms of the extent to which she has ascertained the targets she has set for herself, or the extent to which she can be said to have reached the levels of (highly) effective practice. This anxiety may arise partly due to the ways in which the evaluation of teaching is set up – the extent to which the teacher and the school must use evidence to measure her progress, the progress of her students, and the effectiveness of what she is carrying out in the classroom in terms of the input of teaching and the output of learning, and the force of the terminologies she employs to describe her practice and levels of improvement.

In another sense, the teacher is merely anxious *in spite of this*, and this anxiety, I will argue, is underpinned by the very nature of teaching, which necessarily involves a sense of exposure to the Other. Indeed, this form of anxiety relates to the ways in which the teacher *performs* in a classroom – a performance which goes beyond the mechanism of performativity that we see with the obsessive emphasis on evidence-based evaluation.

To draw these two kinds of anxiety out further, let us consider an example of a pianist who is (anxiously) about to perform a recital. On the one hand, the pianist is anxious about his technique – using the correct fingering, following the tempo and dynamics on the sheet music as precisely as possible, using a metronome to ensure his rhythm is kept at a consistently steady pace. His anxiety stems from the effectiveness of the performance of his technique understood in a purely mechanical sense, and thus, to use Lyotard's (1979) term, it is an anxiety of *performativity* – where one's primary concern is the extent to which the 'output' of the performance can be carried out with the greatest level of effectiveness.

Lyotard (1979) relates performativity to a kind of 'terror', and indeed, anxiety of this kind can lead to a certain sense of neurosis in its obsession with making sure that the piece is executed in a technically perfect way. If this pianist were to evaluate his performance in accordance with

definitions of ‘good techniques’ outlined in reputable frameworks for piano-playing, he could easily pinpoint where he went wrong, what he needs to improve upon, and perhaps even the ways he can enact these changes. He could even measure the extent to which he improved with near accuracy, using evidence to demonstrate this improvement robustly.

But what this pianist is missing out on, both in the evaluation of and the performance itself, is the actual music, and the vital role *he* plays in relation to that. In focusing narrowly on the technicalities of his performance, one could argue that he is impeding the extent to which he can lose himself in the music, in the experience, in what is happening there in the present moment. The anxiety of performativity has perhaps even enveloped the joy he feels of being present in the music, a joy one often feels is tampered with over-practicing and fixating on improving one’s technique.

Of course, this is not to deny the importance of technique, particularly in the execution of music. Indeed, one could argue that technique is inescapably apart of the ability of the pianist to perform. Technique, itself, is a hugely complex term, and involves more than the technical focus it is often associated with. But to argue that such an understanding of technique is all that there *is* is to reduce the performance to a mere display of technicality and not of music itself.

Regardless of the focus on the technicalities of the performance, one could imagine that the pianist is still anxious about his recital. But where does *this* anxiety stem from? Of course, it will always, in part, be a concern with making mistakes. But, more importantly, it is also the making of mistakes when exposed to the Other, the consequences rather than the act of those mistakes, such as the accompanying sense of shame or embarrassment that might ensue in light of this. And whilst one might argue that, indeed, the pianist’s anxiety of performativity is assuaged once his execution of a piece is technically perfect, it still does not limit a deeper sense of anxiety that the player will seemingly always be plagued with – namely, the anxiety of *performance* and the accompanying exposure that is an inevitable part of any such performance.

Teachers are unavoidably exposed in a similar way. As Standish (2014) points out, it is often through teaching that we become aware of our individual attributes or dispositions that we had not realised before – certain mannerisms we demonstrate or perhaps particular ways of speaking we had not realised. Indeed, since this exposure is inevitable, so too is the anxiety that accompanies it.

But like pianists, teachers also perform in a sense that goes beyond this kind of performativity we often associate with teaching. What self-evaluation is primarily concerned with, however, is the technicised and performative aspect of teaching – that which can be measured using an evidence-based ‘language of evaluation’. Even in considering its somewhat ironic attempts to assuage the anxieties of the teacher and of the public, what it primarily focuses on is an anxiety

of performativity, and not the more fundamental, and indeed necessary, sense of anxiety indicated above. Ultimately, it is an exercise in ‘bad faith’.

Sartre and Bad Faith

In order to understand this more fundamental, sense of anxiety on a deeper level, it is useful to digress for a moment and to think about what Sartre refers to as ‘bad faith’.

‘Bad faith’ itself is an intricate term that not only requires greater explanation, but also the use of a particular and purposefully disjointed language which jars with the kind of clean, certain language that we often see in policy documents. Arguably, the adoption of this language can awaken the reader to the ways in which bad faith functions in often furtive and invisible ways. Interestingly, Sartre adopts various linguistic forms in order to do so – from his anxiety-inducing works of literature and theatre that often have a profoundly destabilising effect on their audiences, to the denser and more taxing content in his philosophical tomes. The idea of ‘bad faith’ is explored in many of his works, most notably in his seminal text, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), but also in his novels and plays, such as *No Exit* (1944), *The Roads to Freedom* trilogy (1945) and *Nausea* (1938).

To understand this concept, and how it is that individuals and institutions may be said to *be* in bad faith, one must first accept the premise that, above all, individuals are ‘condemned to be free’. Ironically, this freedom does not serve to ‘liberate’ the individual in a conventional sense, but rather forces us to confront our often anxiety-inducing responsibility in the face of such freedoms. Broadly understood, bad faith is partly a kind of coping mechanism enacted by humans to curb this anxiety.

Indeed, when Sartre talks about ‘bad faith’, he is specifically referring to the ways in which human beings often deny this freedom that is essential to their nature as conscious beings. Sartre contrasts the notion that humans exist as beings with consciousness (what he terms *being-for-itself*) with another fundamental mode of being, namely, *being-in-itself*, which refers to inert, inanimate objects that exist gratuitously in the world – trees, benches, grass. These objects exist without any specific usage or purpose in themselves, but rather are only purposeful in relation to what the other mode of being – the *being-for-itself* – assigns to them. For this reason, Sartre often describes them as ‘opaque’ or ‘full’ of being in that they are fully determined by something beyond their control.

A person, unlike a *thing-in-itself*, has consciousness. He looks towards something; he encounters his past and his future. He tries to live in the present moment only to find that once he reflects upon this moment, it has already passed. A person never simply *is*, therefore – he is always *becoming*. Not just in a temporal sense, but also in the very nature of his consciousness, which is directed ‘outside’ of his body, towards things ‘out there’. Indeed, the *being-for-itself* continually transcends both space and time - it is never ‘full’ in the way that *being-in-itself* is.

From this, Sartre argues that ‘existence precedes essence’, a phrase that has arguably become the epitome of French existentialism (or at least by those who accepted this label). The human person is not a ‘thing’ in the concrete sense – they are not endowed with a fixed, immovable core, nor a fixed, immovable purpose or usage, but rather, they exist insofar as they (inter)act. And it is in (inter)acting that they become who they *become*. This contingency of existence, however, reveals an inescapable freedom that is at the core of every human person – that things can really be any other way, that they are superfluous, gratuitous, *de trop*. Since existence is ultimately defined by contingency, it leaves us with an inalienable sense of freedom – the freedom to define oneself. This freedom, however, involves the tremendous weight of responsibility – since we are free to become who we are, we are therefore also solely responsible for the person we become through our (inter)actions.

Nevertheless, Sartre’s idea of freedom does not deny that we exist within certain ‘factual’ limitations – we are embodied in a specific way, we exist within a society with social constraints, we have been ‘assigned’ genders, sexualities, and statuses. And yet, we are also fundamentally free, according to Sartre, and are thus wholly responsible for the ways in which we respond to the facticity of our existence.⁷ Thus, in being both transcendent and constrained by facticity, ‘one is...in the mode of being what one is not’, and it is in such uneasy tensions that human nature is often underpinned by an inescapable element of difficult but necessary anxiety.

These uneasy tensions are further described in *Notebooks for Ethics*, where Sartre comments: ‘I am on the same plane a specific object and free subject but never the two at the same time and always the one haunted by the other’ (Sartre, 1983). Indeed, humans continuously occupy the various manifestations of the *for-itself* and the *in-itself*. This leads to the aforementioned underlying sense of anxiety that is, therefore, intimately connected to what it means to be a human. It is from this that Bell (1989, p. 32) notes, ‘...being human is itself a challenge many would prefer to avoid.’ Moreover, it is in confrontation of such challenges that the notion of ‘bad faith’ arises.

Bad faith may be described simply as the denial of the ‘self’ as something which is transcendent (and therefore free), as that which is not fixed in a permanent state but, rather, is perpetually becoming. Similarly, it arises through a denial of the factual limitations which we are ultimately responsible for responding to⁸. This is manifest in a number of ways, according to Sartre. We might like to think about who we want to be in 10 years’ time, and with that fixed image in our minds, we work towards it in the hopes of definitively attaining this identity. We might wish

⁷ Sartre downplays this position somewhat in his later works. This is particularly evident in an interview in the *New Left Review* in 1969, entitled ‘The Itinerary of a Thought’. Marxism was to have a profound influence on his post-war writings, in which he began to see the ways in which individuals are conditioned by various social factors and histories over which they have little to no control.

⁸ The focus for this paper will be bad faith as a denial of freedom, since this is most pertinent to the argument outlined here.

to be recognised in a certain way by others, and work to perfect our image to the extent that the ways in which this recognition is conferred upon us becomes the very ways in which we understand ourselves. We might take our jobs too seriously, such as the waiter that Sartre describes (and admonishes) in *Being and Nothingness* who has become so ‘waiter-like’ in his mannerisms that he forgets that he is not *just* a waiter. We might feel certain of our ability to ‘know ourselves’, an ability which relies on our monitoring, measuring and verifying that we are meeting particular standards we (or others) have set for ourselves.

But all of this is to deny the sense in which we, as human beings, are not inanimate objects, or *beings-in-themselves*. And thus, the ultimate attribute of bad faith, according to Sartre, is when we attempt to fashion ourselves as such kinds of objects, denying the extent to which we are transcendent and, thus, always beyond fixation.

In one example in the chapter on bad faith, Sartre discusses the ‘performative pupil’, of whom many of us may be familiar. The pupil sits in the classroom, trying to appear sincere and attentive in front of the teacher. No doubt, this pupil has a fixed image in mind of what a ‘good student’ looks like – being bright-eyed, following the teacher’s movements precisely with his eyes, sitting upright, with his ‘ears wide open.’ Much of this comes from (societal) attitudes of what the function of a pupil is since, according to Sartre (1943, p. 59):

Society demands that he limit himself to his function... There are indeed many precautions to imprison man in what he is as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition.

Perhaps, indeed, much of how the student behaves comes from our own encouragement as teachers.

Importantly, however, is the way in which the pupil ‘exhausts himself’ in playing this attentive role. Indeed, the pupil is, in fact, paying *too much* attention to being attentive, to the extent that he is not really listening to what is going on around him. His attentiveness is performed in such a way that, in doing so, he is missing out on all of the other constitutive (and immeasurable) factors that make him a pupil. Like the example of the pianist explored above, his performance impinges not only upon his level of genuine engagement in the class, but also on the extent to which he can actually *do something* about what it going on. This form of role-playing allows him to avoid engaging with content, for example, something that can often be difficult, harrowing, jarring, something that he can freely disrupt by virtue of simply being a free human being, imbued with consciousness. Furthermore, by performing the attentive role, he need not feel anxious about how he will be perceived by the teacher or by his classmates (looking bored, asking a ‘stupid’ question etc.).

The issue here is not simply the way in which the pupil behaves, even if this is an important factor to take into consideration. Rather, the issue is also the extent to which he is denying his own existential freedom – something which, essentially, is part of what makes him a human being as opposed to an automaton. Of course, he doesn’t *have* to be attentive in this way.

Rather, he is faced with many options from which he can choose – to struggle against the teacher and what is going on, to engage with what is happening in class, to be truly present in the moment. Indeed, he has, in fact, chosen to adopt this performative role. In doing so, he has chosen to succumb to his facticity, to a ‘fixed’ essence of being a pupil *in itself*. Moreover, by fashioning himself in this essentialist way, he is also alienating himself from the vital performance in which he could realise himself as a free, conscious being – i.e. the performance as a form of real engagement with the class, with content, and with the others that surround him. In forgoing his responsibility to do so, he is in bad faith.

Yet those functions he embodies make it difficult for him to think outside of the categories of performing as a ‘good pupil’, much like the ‘language of evaluation’ makes it difficult to think of teaching in any other, or remarkably different, way. Indeed, being in bad faith is described by Sartre as a ‘putting oneself to sleep’. It is an ambiguously conscious choice to remain unaware of the acts of bad faith we are engaged in, partly in order to avoid the anxiety that such a realisation incurs.

The alternative to bad faith – ‘authenticity’ – therefore requires an awareness as well as an acceptance of this unlimited sense of both freedom and responsibility and the accompanying anxiety this entails. The sense in which we are not inert objects which can be known or predicted with any degree of certainty means also having to live with the sense of existential alienation in recognising that we are rootless, exiled from the ‘world of objects’ around us, exposed to the Other and, indeed, displaced from, or ‘beyond’, ourselves. Fashioning oneself as an object, however, and residing in bad faith, represents our attempts to superficially ease such unnerving anxiety. And yet, being in ‘good faith’ involves the acknowledgement of our ontological position as a subject with unlimited freedom, and thus *rightly* underpinned by a state of anxiety and alienation.

Self-Evaluation as Bad Faith

So what does this say about self-evaluation? As explored from the outset, self-evaluation may be said to pacify certain anxieties around teaching in front of an inspector, having one’s behaviour and practice assessed. Since it is robust, however, it may also serve to calm the anxiety of the public, in raising levels of trust in teacher professionalism through the expectation that evidence be used to certify any judgments about practice and their apparent need for improvement, and the requisite appropriation of the ‘language of evaluation’.

In order to achieve this pacification, however, self-evaluation involves imagining oneself as a fully-determinable, fixed object of sorts, one that can be easily gauged and subsequently measured in terms of certain profiles of (highly) effective practice. And yet in doing so, our focus remains on the performative, on those aspects that are conducive to measurement. As a result of this, the teacher alienates herself from the performance she is inevitably involved in, denying those often anxiety-inducing aspects of teaching that are not amenable to measurement in the same way. She is, indeed, in bad faith.

Like the pianist who focuses on perfecting the technicalities of his performance, teaching involves more than performativity, but it does involve a performance of sorts. This performance is easy to forget when one focuses solely on the performative aspects. Perhaps the anxiety that ensues is *more* than just a worry over making errors. In both cases, there is a sense in which one puts a part of himself into the performance – his nuance, his style, his interpretation, his way of presenting something to the world that matters to him. Part of this anxiety might rise from his concern over the ways in which the performance, which necessarily involves all of these elements, is received and (re)interpreted by the audience. Perhaps, because of this, the pianist will always be anxious about any performance, since a performance necessarily implies an exposure, and therefore a vulnerability, of himself to the thoughts, reactions, judgements and (mis)recognition of the audience.

The teacher's sense of anxiety does not have to follow a grand unveiling of a Sartrean understanding of freedom and consciousness, but as Sartre has rightly shown us through the idea of bad faith, it often comes to us in subtle and, indeed, immeasurable ways – in the ways we encounter the students as the Other, or how teachers are encountered as Other by the student. It may become manifest in the content the teacher passes on and the rationales behind doing so – in why one thinks certain things 'matter'. It may appear in the ways in which the teacher is exposed in front of the classroom, her personhood on display, despite, perhaps, her best efforts to conceal it. It may also appear more abruptly with a rowdy and disruptive class, which, despite our best attempts to find solutions in the simplest of terms, can often belie something much more important and telling. In any 'performance', the teacher is *there*, at a specific time and place, with specific content that she has had to (assumedly) grapple with herself, digest, interpret, (re)configure, and (re)present to the world. What is on display is not simply that which can be measured. And yet, all of this is repressed when one has to fashion oneself in this way, and concern oneself solely with performative aspects, and with that which can be measured, rather than being present in the performance of teaching itself.

What is it that really matters in teaching? Of course, in a certain sense, technique, in the mechanical sense, is important. But is that all that teaching is – the employment of a specific technique? And if it is not, then can we measure teaching in the same ways that we would measure technique? These questions, seemingly lost in the urgency of policy, may open up a deeper discussion around what it means to be a teacher, and how we can more authentically evaluate good teaching, which goes beyond the kinds of performative anxiety that self-evaluation, unfortunately, seems to promote.

Indeed, one might argue, that the teacher *is* anxious, *should be* anxious, and must learn to live, and work, well with this. What, indeed, is the measure of that?

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Alison M. Brady is a PhD candidate and Teaching Fellow at the UCL Institute of Education. She also works as the London Branch administrator of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. Her research is within the field of philosophy of education, which focuses on offering a critique of current understandings of teaching and learning as represented in teacher evaluation policies, and conceptualising teaching more broadly through the lens of 20th century existentialist thought. Related publications include “The Regime of Self-Evaluation: Self-Conception for Teachers and Schools” (British Journal of Educational Studies, 64 (4), pp. 523-541) and an upcoming book chapter for “Philosophy and the Study of Education” (Routledge, London) entitled, “The Teacher-Student Relationship: An Existentialist Approach.”

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