Being a Teacher: Towards an Existentialist Account

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Declaration

I, Alison Mary Brady, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Against the current grain of teacher accountability, this thesis aims to reconceptualise how we might account for teaching through an engagement with Jean-Paul Sartre's early existentialist thought.

In Part I, I will begin by situating the issue in relation to school self-evaluation policy in the Republic of Ireland. This policy exemplifies three connected fallacies in accounting for the practices of teaching – firstly, the perceived need to balance accountability and autonomy; secondly, the focus on building capacities for the use of communication norms couched within the language of effectiveness; and thirdly, the emphasis on a reductive understanding of 'evidence' in such accounts. Above all, these fallacies portray teaching as a 'technicist' endeavour and are ultimately based on problematic assumptions about the experience of being a teacher.

Part II turns to the demanding account of being a human in Sartre's thought. Here, it is argued that the classroom serves as a microcosm where many of these ideas can be explored. By paying close attention to everyday examples of teaching, I aim to build upon Sartre's key concepts related to the self, freedom, bad faith, and the Other, such that they might open up new ways of thinking about the practices of teaching.

Part III considers how to account for teaching in light of this. Since so much of teacher accountability is embedded within the paradigm of 'effectiveness', the current focus is often on how to measure or 'prove' our accounts of teaching in neat, accurate forms. But given the everyday complexities that underpin teaching, as well as the vulnerabilities and uncertainty that it so often involves, I argue for the creation of a space in which to reimagine forms of accounting that move from technicist ways of thinking to existential sensitivity in relation to one's practice as a teacher.

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Impact Statement

The aim of this thesis is to critique how teaching is accounted for in current educational discourses, taking *School Self-Evaluation* policy in Ireland as an example. By engaging with the early thought of Jean-Paul Sartre, the space in which to offer an alternative model of accounting for teaching is thereby created. I firmly believe that doing so will contribute to knowledge, practice and policy in the following ways.

Firstly, this study expands upon trends in educational research that critique the dominant ways in which teaching is described in educational policy by engaging with an important thinker in the history of philosophy – Jean-Paul Sartre – despite his having been somewhat neglected in this field. Sartre is now experiencing a 'revival' of sorts (e.g. Aronson, 2018; Litchfield, 2005), one that I can confidently say I am a (small) part of. So far, I have published quite extensively for my level of study, often in high-impact journals such as the *Oxford Review of Education*, the *British Journal of Educational Research*, and the *Journal for Philosophy of Education* (e.g. Brady, 2016; 2019a; 2019b; 2020c). I have also presented at numerous national and international conferences, and continue to be deeply involved in relevant societies such as the *Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain* (Executive Committee Member, 2020) and the *International Network of Philosophers of Education* (Junior Scholar, 2016) with the purpose of disseminating my research within the academic community. Thankfully, my work has always been positively received, with reviewers and conference participants remarking on its significance for both educational researchers and teachers. In my most recently accepted publication (Brady, 2020c), for example, one reviewer commented that my work would prove to be fruitful in graduate-level study. I, myself, have used my own research in my teaching at university, and am thus both familiar with and capable of distributing my research to academic audiences.

Importantly, this research does not simply showcase the value of Sartre's thought for education, but activity seeks to make it more accessible to whomsoever is interested in such matters of educational concern. As such, my research may also prove to be valuable for practitioners, particularly those in the early stages of their career. My hope is that this work will encourage deeper reflection, not only on what teachers *should* be doing in the classroom, but in terms of what it actually means to *be* a teacher, notwithstanding the complexity that so often characterises this. For similar reasons, those working in teacher education, such as ITT mentors, may find this research particularly worthwhile.

Finally, by offering an alternative discourse by which to account for the practices of teaching, a new understanding of the profession is offered. This, in turn, will inform policymakers as well as the wider public on what teaching entails, and how our current conceptions of teaching often fall short in capturing this. Thus, my research also contributes to public discourses of teaching, something I intend to further contribute to beyond my doctoral studies.

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It has taken me the best part of 6 years to complete this thesis, and for that reason, there are probably too many people to remember to thank.

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Introduction

Why I Write

> Writing… is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one cannot resist nor understand (Orwell, 2004, p. 10).

In *Why I Write*, George Orwell (2004, p. 8) argues that what someone chooses to write about inevitably reflects not only 'the age he lives in', but a '[d]esire to push the world in a particular direction.' Strictly speaking, no account can be apolitical in this sense. Even when we are not aware of it, we are always responding to the situation in which we find ourselves, responses that become manifest in the accounts we give. At the same time, the explanations and motivations we assign to ourselves and our actions are likely retroactive. They are not necessarily there in the initial moment that moved us to act. This is certainly true of my own motivations for writing this thesis, where it was only through the process of writing itself that I came to some sense of what it is that I want to achieve in doing so. There was, of course, a starting point – a shifting frontier of sorts that relates to my own experiences of being a teacher.

The feelings I have about teaching now are certainly different than when I was a teacher starting out. When I began teaching, it was not something I particularly enjoyed or took seriously. I found myself feeling constantly exposed and uncertain in what I was doing, and in what *right* I had to be teaching in the first place. I was not an expert by any means, and although I loved my subject, I understood why others might not appreciate it in the same way. But who was I to convince them otherwise? I myself did not like school. I found it mind-numbing at times, not because it was excessively easy, but often because it was excessively difficult and, at times, alienating. When it seemed like the students *I* was teaching were also experiencing the same kind of mind-numbing experience, who was I to rectify that? Yes, I was 'the teacher' - but what did that even mean?

When I was first training to be a teacher, I had to complete self-reflective forms every week. Despite the ways in which I *really* felt, my means of expression were always couched within a particular 'language' I did not use elsewhere. I referred to my practices in terms of their 'effectiveness', judiciously selecting student work that I felt reflected this. I romanticised what I was experiencing as a teacher, remarking on how rewarding the job was and the ways in which I felt I was making a 'difference'. I tried to convince myself that this was true, since if I thought otherwise, should I even be a teacher? One time, one of my lecturers informally asked me and the rest of my seminar group how we were getting on in our teaching placements. As I recall, this was only time I *did* share some of the uncertainty I felt. I spoke about how humiliating teaching sometimes felt – when you lose control of the class and another teacher has to step in, or when the students mockingly comment on what you are wearing, or when you spend an inordinate amount of time planning for what sometimes would seem to be a hugely unappreciated lesson. David Hansen (2017) accounts for similar uncertainties in the teachers he mentored. But unlike them, I was met with a wall of silence. The others shifted their glances to the floor. I felt embarrassed. I felt like the others probably thought I was not very good at what I was doing, that perhaps I should think about a career change, or that I was not focusing on what were the really important aspects of my job but instead on petty complaints.

Even writing about it now is difficult. I want to supplement my account with all the positive feedback I have gotten from students over the years, with the kinds of things I write in my CV and in cover letters. I find myself being judgemental about the teacher I used to be - the persona I would adopt in the class, the tone I would take with students. I immediately jump to offering myself retrospective advice. It is, indeed, really difficult to dwell on things that make people uncomfortable, or that you feel casts you in a negative light. And this, in turn, makes it difficult to be frank about what you experience. In a sense, the features of the language

that I incorporated in my reflective writing – the effectiveness discourse, the continual focus on what to improve, on how to overcome challenges, on how to set 'SMART' targets – allayed much of this discomfort. And yet, in doing so, I could not help but feel alienated from my very human experiences in the classroom.

In many ways, the feeling of alienation that comes from adopting what I will later refer to as a 'technicist' understanding of teaching is what motivated me to write this thesis. Admittedly, this is something I only came to understand later. Perhaps this is unsurprising given that, as narrative researchers demonstrate, it is often through offering an account of something that the experience is rendered meaningful, not just in the process of writing but in engaging with the account itself (e.g. Moen, 2006; Josselson 2007; 2012). Whilst I do not take a narrative approach in this thesis (in the strict sense of the term), it is undeniable that my own experiences are there in the background of much of what I have to say, perhaps most explicitly in the final chapter of the thesis.

In light of this, this research aims to offer a new way in which to think about both the practices of teaching in a broader sense, to provide the much-needed space where new ways of accounting for what it means to *be a teacher* can therefore ensue. This new way of thinking, speaking, engaging with, and accounting for teaching also requires that we think, speak, engage with, and account for being human. In order to open up this line of thinking, I turn to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, a self-confessed humanist and existential philosopher who does not shy away from the difficult and sometimes painful aspects of being human. But rather than thinking of Sartre as a new 'lens' through which teaching can be described, I aim to investigate how and to what extent his ideas make sense in the classroom. Given that his thought is affective rather than 'useful' in an instrumentalist sense, I explore how Sartre might serve as a 'touchstone' from which to offer and engage with our own accounts of teaching in a way that goes against the 'technicist' accounts commonly found in current educational discourses.

The accounts that Sartre offers do not focus on giving a definitive picture of what a human *is*, but instead represents an attempt to navigate the uncertainties that arise from our perpetual failure to answer that very question in the first place. Indeed, Sartre does not directly concern himself with what might be called a profile of the 'good' or 'bad' person. Rather, he draws our attention to the ways in which we act on the world that we are thrown into in spite of these categories, and that through confronting our ultimate freedom and responsibility, we are faced with the opportunity to account for ourselves in ways that embrace the uncertainties of lived experience. Similarly, my aim is not to directly engage with normative accounts of what good or bad teaching looks like. Yet, it is not that the accounts I offer *avoid* normativity. Like Orwell, Sartre indicates that this would, in fact, be impossible, given that the very situations in which one finds oneself are brought to light by the subjects involved. Nevertheless, the strength of Sartre's ideas lies in their resonance rather than in the extent to which they represent 'accurate' or 'true' or 'good' accounts of teaching. Indeed, an engagement with Sartre's often controversial and destabilising thought serves an altogether different purpose – it compels a *response*, and therefore a *responsibility*, not only on behalf of the account-giver, but on the behalf of the reader as well. This model of account-giving might be therefore thought of as a process, one that involves a continual re-evaluation of *who we are* and *what we do* in light of the accounts we give. With this in mind, this thesis aims to create a space in which to reimagine forms of accounting that move from technicist ways of thinking to existential sensitivity in relation to one's practice as a teacher.

Research Context

Over the last forty years or so, Ireland has undoubtedly turned away from the deep conservatism of its past. My generation has witnessed the waning influence of the Catholic Church, and the gradual embracing of a new form of liberalism in all areas of social life. I grew up during the

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height of the Celtic Tiger era, as part of a generation that witnessed the legacy of the Civil War and the eventual peace process, and with that, the attempts to transcend the traditional forms of nationalism that have characterised the conflict on the island for decades. I was part of the movement towards modernisation and prosperity, a generational shift that, above all else, upholds the sanctity of the individual. My parents' generation passed on the often-unquestioned belief in the power of capital for regeneration, and I, in turn, spent many years proudly and defensively declaring this. Indeed, Ireland was no longer a poor country perched on the periphery of Europe, but, at one point, one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Allen, 2000; IMF, 2002), an open and embracing country with a global outlook. And as the wealth in the country grew, my arguments for its modernisation remained largely economic in nature. But I am also part of the generation in part defined by its experience of the Great Recession: the dwindling of opportunities, mass emigration, the increasing visibility of economic disparity between rural and urban, inner city and suburbia, the private and the public sector. This 'revelation' was surprising, and in many ways, entered into public conversation the need to radically rethink not just the economic direction of the country, but the social implications of this as well (e.g. Allen, 2000; Kitchen *et al.*, 2012; Coulter and Nagel, 2015).

And yet, the debate that arose from this revelation contrasted sharply with the reaction of other countries in similar positions (Holborow, 2015). This is in part because of the 'third way' socio-political climate that characterises Ireland more broadly (e.g. Fischer, 2014). For one, Ireland's political arena is dominated by 'catch-all' parties that aim to appease both sides of the political spectrum. And whilst there are certainly challenges to this in the most recent elections, it has nevertheless allowed an often-contradictory neoliberal discourse to flourish, particularly with the rise of the Celtic Tiger, but also as a solution to the economic downturn (e.g. Harris, 2007; Mooney Simmie, 2012; Fitzsimons, 2017). One of the key aspects of the 'third way' political climate is the necessity of consensus. Whilst this is desirable in many respects, it also harbours a number of pitfalls – that despite being 'deliberative' by implication, the focus is often on appeasing disenfranchised groups in order to shut down genuine dialogue, resulting in both a lack of alternative discourse as well as the hierarchisation of communication norms that denigrate those that do not adhere to the criteria for 'sensible' debate (Gaynor, 2011). This characterises the social sphere as well, where the lack of discussion around uncomfortable and emotionally-charged issues (e.g. in relation to mental and sexual health) in part stem from an anxiety around potential dissensus. But consensus is a fragile thing. In recent years, Ireland has witnessed momentous social changes, including the Gay Marriage and Abortion referenda in 2016 and 2018 respectively, both of which resulted in the eruption of the deep-seated divisions that, until then, had been bubbling below the surface of Irish society. Ireland is also now confronted with a crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, where calls to radically change how things are done are a regular aspect of public discourse (e.g. Horgan-Jones, 2020). At this stage, only time will tell if those discussions mean that such changes come to fruition, or whether or not the more pressing concerns caused by yet another recession will result in more neoliberal solutions.

Writing in the midst and aftermath of the Second World War, Sartre's generation could not be further apart from this in many respects. They were a generation faced with extreme conditions, ones that nevertheless created the space for a radical reconceptualization of society. Of course, I do not wish to romanticise his era, nor do I wish to claim that these debates were happening across all sectors of French society. But the dissensus that Sartre and his literary counterparts encapsulate was vital in many ways, and demonstrate how the neutralisation of alternative discourses can lead to a very dangerous line of thinking. Despite the differences between our time and Sartre's, other less obvious challenges persist today. Both the modernising agenda as well as globalised technological advancements have given us a new range of choices in 'being who we are', choices that are often tied to a subtle but pervasive

form of consumerism. These modern identities allow for greater flexibility in adopting various roles in spite of our particular situations, with our access enlarged through our use of technology and social media. But such profiles are more than simply 'options' to choose from. Rather, they give us a language through which we can express ourselves, and in doing so, allow us to adopt an identity that is intelligible to others (Butler, 2007). In this sense, they are an intimate part of our own self-understanding. Stemming from this is a form of pseudo-individualism, one that also relies on consensus across contradicting claims, where what is considered 'individual' and 'authentic' is, in fact, produced by normalising institutions. This is similar to what Sartre (1973b) was also concerned with and thus sought to remedy with his radical and often controversial claims to individual freedom and responsibility. Arguably, it is an issue that relates to the so-called disenchantment of the world, also reflected, perhaps, in the 'secularisation' of Irish society (Grosby, 2013; Taylor, 2018). Thus, whilst there are certainly limitations in Sartre's thought, as well as the sense in which it needs greater nuance in modern life, many of his ideas remain relevant today. As I aim to demonstrate, Sartre's ideas are particularly significant in allowing for an alternative discourse that forces us confront the often-unquestioned ways in which we understand ourselves and our situatedness within wider society.

In the educational sphere, a prime example of pseudo-individualistic, consensus-driven approaches is school self-evaluation, a central component of the Irish teacher inspection system. On the surface, school self-evaluation appears to be a positive alternative to other inspection systems. It takes a capacity-building approach that aims to develop the professionalism of teachers, thereby giving space to autonomous decision-making. It encourages teachers to adopt 'best practice approaches', not only in their teaching, but also in how they recognise and implement plans for improvement. It aims to cultivate 'data literacy' in teachers such that they can employ evidence-based approaches in their professional reflections (e.g. McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; DES, 2016b; 2016c). It presents teachers with a *profile* of effective practice to measure themselves against, to recognise and implement in their own ways of being in the classroom, to aspire towards – and, ultimately, to incorporate in their own accounts of teaching.

Central to third way movements is the ways in which they frame themselves as 'beyond reproach', and self-evaluation is not immune from this. Where it *is* criticised, the focus is often on its practicality (O'Hara *et al.* 2007; McNamara *et al.* 2006; 2007; 2011; O'Brien *et al.* 2015), or its overall usefulness for impacting practice (Ehren *et al.* 2013; Gustafsson *et al.* 2015). But such criticisms do not address the implicit problems that self-evaluation represents. Above all, this includes the unexamined assumptions in its accounts of teaching, and the effects this has on the conception of teaching in a broader sense. The measurement culture implicit in this form of evaluation does not just assume that we can measure what it is that we value, nor does it just assume that things that happen in the classroom are always explicit, and thus easily captured and 'proven' through data. It also pushes the assumption that accounts ought to *only* be based on a narrow conception of evidence, on a pre-specified, technicist 'language of evaluation', one that harbours a debased sense of accuracy, and in turn frames what can be included (and, by extension, excluded) in the account on the basis of this. Above all, these accounts are instrumental for one fundamental reason – to improve in line with externally-produced profiles of effective practice, to prove that this is the case, and to hold teachers accountable in light of this.

As I will demonstrate throughout, these technicist descriptions are ingrained in current conceptions of accountability in teaching. But an alternative conceptualisation of this in terms of the lived experience of being a teacher is nevertheless possible. In offering a framework that disrupts current discourses, new avenues of thought on teaching may be opened up, ones that suggest other – and, indeed, more important – ways of accounting for being a teacher. This

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alternative model of account-giving involves relating oneself to what is rendered in such accounts, as testament to the deep and inescapable freedom and responsibility that is inherent in the very act of teaching itself. This will involve a move from 'technicist' to 'existentialist' accounts of teaching: the former of which emphasises that which is measurable and explicit in teaching, the latter of which values instead the implicit challenges and uncertainty that teaching – and our accounts of this - necessarily involve.

Of course, the term 'existentialist' is complex and multi-layered. It is often applied in retrospect to philosophers who, in one way or another, paid attention to the lived experience of the individual, particularly in times of societal upheaval. The reason for choosing Sartre is not to suggest that he alone is representative of this rich and historically diverse movement. Nevertheless, he was one of the only philosophers who defined *himself* as an existentialist, and he can also be credited with making the term accessible to a much broader audience through both his academic and literary works. Sartre places the individual at the centre of his (early) philosophical exploration, not as a subsidiary to his main ideas but as an essential starting point for his entire body of work. Although somewhat abandoned after his death, he is experiencing a 'revival' of sorts (Litchfield, 2005; Aronson, 2018), notwithstanding the re-translation of *Being and Nothingness* by Sarah Richmond in 2018. But also, perhaps *we* are experiencing a time where this line of thinking makes sense, a time of upheaval in which questions surrounding the place of individual is paramount. This is a time where identity is seen in more and more fluid terms, where generations are 'woke' to the systemic injustice perpetuated across a range of industries (as the #metoo and 'Black Lives Matters' movements continue to demonstrate), where there is a rise in populist forms of governance and the firm ideological entrenchment related to the spread of so-called 'fake news', where there are conversations about the root cause of these injustices and its consequences in the time of a global Covid-19 pandemic, as well as calls for a radical overhaul of how things are done, all of which is ongoing in the midst of the continuing existential threat of environmental destruction. And although aspects of Sartre's thought are controversial at times – and, in fact, misplaced on many level - it nevertheless serves to counteract the distinctly *non*-human ways that individuals are described in technicist discourses, instead capturing some of the complexity of our time and of our*selves* within these significant moments in history.

Overview
This thesis will address the question of how Sartre's early ideas might open up new ways of accounting for the practices of teaching through three interrelated parts.

Evaluating Teachers
The first part of the thesis will begin by situating the discussion in relation to school self-evaluation policy in the Republic of Ireland, a concrete example that will serve as a springboard for exploring how teaching is accounted for in current educational discourses. Here, I investigate the extent to which this policy represents a 'technicist' understanding of teaching. Chapter 1 considers the socio-political context in which the policy of school self-evaluation is situated, and in particular, the 'third way' climate of Irish society. This is exemplified through considering the case of 'social partnerships' in Ireland, and the ways in which this seemingly positive and practical approach to governance has nevertheless allowed neoliberal attitudes to flourish in Irish society.

In Chapter 2, I aim to show how this 'third way' climate is reminiscent of school self-evaluation policy, particularly in its emphasis on appeasement rather than debate, and the ways in which, in spite of this, it hierarchises certain communication norms that neutralises alternative discourses on teaching. Firstly, I argue that self-evaluation aims in part to uphold

the precarious balance between accountability and autonomy, leading to unresolved contradictions that nevertheless manage to pacify those involved in the process. In order to achieve this, I demonstrate how particular norms of communication are cultivated, premised on initiating teachers into the specific culture, logic, and language of self-evaluation. This language is underpinned by a narrow conception of 'evidence', one that harbours a number of problematic and too-often unchallenged assumptions: the use of 'objective' data in making judgements in favour of so-called 'subjective' values, the focus on what is explicit in classroom practices at the expense of what is implicit, and the emphasis on recognising 'effectiveness' only in terms what is instrumentally rather than ultimately valuable for education. Ultimately, I aim to show how this 'technicist' understanding of teaching not only impacts the ways in which we recognise effectiveness in practice, but also influences our conception of teaching in a broader sense, particularly in terms of how we might account for what teaching entails. In turning away from the inherent reductionism that characterises such accounts of teaching, I instead turn towards the rich but demanding work of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sartre and Existentialism
The second part of this thesis focuses on the accounts of being human in Sartre's early thought, considering both his philosophical texts as well as his literary works. Here, it is argued that the classroom serves as a microcosm where many of these ideas make sense. In order to demonstrate this, I not only offer an exegesis of some of his most central ideas but explore these in relation to everyday examples of teaching, many of which come from reflections on my own experience. These examples are not meant to generalise the experience of teaching but to resonate with the reader in ways that serve to illuminate Sartre's ideas. Ultimately, I aim to demonstrate why Sartre's account of 'being human' acknowledges the often paradoxical and fragmentary ways in which individuals navigate their existence in the world with others, something that is noticeably absent from the more reductive accounts of teaching offered in self-evaluation policies.

In Chapter 3, I offer a brief overview of the development of existentialist thought in philosophy, looking at earlier thinkers who have influenced both this movement as well as Sartre in particular. In doing so, I aim to point out certain 'existential threads' that exist across these diverse thinkers, ones that allow us to not only understand the context in which existentialist thought flourishes, but the distinctive demands it places on readers, standing in stark contrast with the 'neatness' of the policies represented in Part I. These threads include: the place of the individual within a so-called 'disenchanted' world, the lure of nihilism that this situation invites, the rise of scientism as symptomatic of nihilism, and the ways in which this is counteracted through a committed engagement with existentialist ideas. Since scientism is inherent in the technicist policies described in Part I, I argue that existentialism thereby serves as an appropriate and necessary alternative to this line of thinking.

In Chapter 4, I begin with a closer analysis of Sartre's early work, turning first to his conception of the 'self' in the essay *Transcendence of the Ego*, whilst also touching on his other relevant literature that explores this. As we will see, Sartre's conception of the self is central to his overarching philosophy, particularly in terms of the distinction he draws between 'pre-reflective' and 'reflected' forms of consciousness, and the radical reconceptualization of our conventional understanding of selfhood that follows from this. I show how this reconceptualization leads Sartre to argue that what we normally call 'self' is not an internal, essential component of 'who we are', but instead, is an ongoing product of our (inter)actions in the world with others, something that later grounds his overall discussion in *Being and Nothingness.*

Chapter 5 expands on this absence of innate selfhood by introducing a close reading of Sartre's conceptions of freedom and facticity in *Being and Nothingness* (supplemented with

concrete examples from *Nausea*). I explore the ways in which human beings exist within an uneasy tension between these – i.e. between our concrete situatedness in the world and the ways in which we (freely) respond to this. In elucidating Sartre's notion of the 'fundamental project' as related to this tension, a number of issues of educational concern are therefore reimagined – the problematic fact/value divide that underpins evidence-based evaluations, the nature of judgement and responsibility, and the ways in which such judgements take into account both the implicit and explicit aspects of the situation in which they are made. Highlighting the fallacies by which self-evaluation policy conceptualises the nature of judgement allows us to begin to reconsider the possibility – and, indeed, desirability - of accounting for the practices of teaching in new ways.

Chapter 6 turns to the idea of 'bad faith' in Sartre's work, a concept that relates to the ways in which the fundamental anxiety of individual freedom is curbed. I explore this concept through continuing my analysis of *Being and Nothingness*, but also in considering concrete examples from the *Roads to Freedom* trilogy. I demonstrate how 'bad faith' is closely related to the concept of role-playing, arguing that, although role-playing seems to be an inescapable component of teaching, it nevertheless fails to capture the extent to which actors (in whichever role they are 'assigned') are always and implicitly responding to the situation in which they find themselves. I further explore this concept in both an individual and an institutional sense, arguing that the environment in which teachers work makes it difficult to take notice – or indeed, think outside – of the bad faith in institutionalised conceptions of their practices.

In Chapter 7, I examine Sartre's account of the Other in reference to *Being and Nothingness*, but also his play *Huis Clos*, particularly as our existence with others impinges upon the ways in which our 'self' is produced. I explore the sense in which, for Sartre, one always exists as 'being seen' by the Other, and how this, in turn, leads to an irresolvable conflict that underpins much of our self-understanding. I consider this in relation to teaching in various forms –for example, the failure of the 'solipsist teacher' in her attempts to feign indifference towards her students, thus highlighting the immediacy through which we experience our existence with others. But I also consider the possibility of a suspension of this seemingly conflictual relation with the Other, and the important and necessary sense in which the teacher – and, indeed, the students – make themselves vulnerable to one another and to the subject material in the classroom.

Sartre's account of our existence in the world with others demonstrates a complex, challenging, and often paradoxical view of being human. Ultimately, the resonance of Sartre's thought in the realm of teaching offers us a very different way in which to account for such practices, one that values anxieties and uncertainties, struggles and challenges, exposure and vulnerabilities, confusion and disorientation, so much of which is present and necessary in teaching. These should not be valued in a purely instrumental sense (e.g. by recognising uncertainty, I can therefore 'overcome' this in becoming more assured of myself as a teacher). Rather, they are valuable as part and parcel of teaching – indeed, as *essential* to it - much as they are central to what it means to be a human.

Being a Teacher
The final part of the thesis considers how to account for teaching in a way that is distinct from Part I. Chapter 8 begins by considering the more 'practical' ways by which teachers can account for themselves in light of their lived experiences, relating this to what the later Foucault calls 'care of the self'. Whilst recognising that Foucault and Sartre greatly diverged on a number of issues, I nevertheless explore Foucault's understanding of 'parrhesia' as a possible antidote to the 'bad faith' that appears to characterise the accounts we offer of ourselves. I exemplify this in relation to Sartre's retrospective account of his life in his autobiography, *Words.* Towards the end of this chapter, I suggest three 'techniques' by which this might be done in the

educational domain – namely, self-examination, self-diagnosis, and self-testing. Whilst acknowledging that such techniques may be usurped by the 'technicist' forms of account-giving I seek to surpass, I aim to demonstrate how such techniques, if properly understood, may open up new avenues for thinking about accounting for oneself and one's practices (as a teacher) in ways that do not suppress the uncertainty and risk that doing so necessarily involves.

In the final chapter, I offer a comparison between what I have called 'technicist' and 'existentialist' accounts of teaching, based on the divergent ways in which teaching is represented in Parts I and II. I argue that technicist accounts are concerned primarily with a debased sense of accuracy, and the use and inculcation of a reductive description of teaching for this very purpose. I explore how account-giving in the technicist sense is not 'natural' but, rather, is a disposition cultivated through training and professionalisation. This in turn involves a cultivated distrust in one's own capacity to account for situations in ways that are distinct from the norms of communication embedded in these technicist discourses. In contrast to this, I explore how existentialist accounts, exemplified through my engagement with Sartre in Part II, recognise that the act of account-giving is inherent in teaching itself, where teachers are always responding to – and, indeed, are responsible for – the situations in which they find themselves. In this sense, accountability is not a skill but a way of being in the classroom. Unlike technicist models of account-giving, existentialist accounts are not centrally concerned with an accurate portraying of events. Rather, existentialist forms of account-giving involve relating oneself to such events, a process inevitably underscored by irresolvable complexities, by fundamentally uncapturable pre-reflective judgements, and by belated explanations of what we have done and, indeed, who we are. As such, I aim to shift the focus of account-giving away from attempts to explain behaviour in situations to guide and improve practice, but instead as a way to lay oneself bare and to (re)examine the commitments made manifest in one's action, much in line with the parrhesiastic attitudes explored in Chapter 8. This also involves recognising that although accounts are often 'poisoned' by our tendency to explain ourselves, our ability to continually do so signals a deep and inescapable freedom and responsibility not only *for* ourselves, *for* situations or *for* others, but inherent in the very act of account-giving itself.

With this in mind, let us turn to the social and historical context through which the Irish policy of self-evaluation can be better understood, before examining how it might represent a technicist account of teaching.

Part I:

Evaluating Teachers

1

The Origins of Inspection:
The Neoliberal Agenda in Ireland

1.1 Neoliberalism: Definitions and Origins

Jeremy Bentham, the prolific utilitarian philosopher and co-architect of the infamous *Panopticon*, once said: 'the more strictly we are watched, the better we behave' (Bentham, as cited in Crimmins, 2011, p. 161). This quote accurately sums up the penchant of modern societies to manage, monitor, and regulate public services such that some improvement in our behaviour can be attained. This so-called 'audit society' (Power, 1996) affects many aspects of our life today, but in education, it resonates in particular with inspection systems. According to the *Memorandum on Inspection and Innovation* delivered at the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (2013, p. 9), 'inspection concerns itself, either implicitly or explicitly, with requiring deliverers of services or citizens themselves to conform to certain expectations.' In the case of education, one might call these expectations 'standards', and if education is seen in terms of service provision, then schools, and indeed teachers, are to be held accountable in meeting them. The purpose of inspections systems is to not only measure the extent of this, but also to design frameworks that allow schools to show that this is the case. Indeed, according to Shewbridge, the head of the OECD *Strategic Education Governance* project (as cited in Grek and Lindgren, 2016, p. 164):

> When Ministries and other bodies with specific responsibilities for system evaluation need to show accountability for their performance, this stimulates demand for procedures to monitor progress in the school system and, where necessary, to establish adequate systems to collect evidence on progress.

The rationale behind school inspections falls in line with the rise of new public management, symptomatic of a pervasive form of neoliberalism in the educational sector. The first part of this chapter will chart some common definitions of neoliberalism, and discuss how it has manifested itself in the Irish context. The so-called 'third way' socio-political climate of Ireland will then be examined in light of this, particularly in terms of the 'social partnership' scheme during the Celtic Tiger era. This movement towards 'third way' thinking in political circles, coupled with neoliberal ideas around new public management and the knowledge economy, is useful in understanding the current policy of 'school self-evaluation' as explored in the next chapter.

Although neoliberalism is not the direct cause of inspection systems, it nevertheless provides conditions that incentivise governmental bodies to implement them. This has led to a series of changes in the educational landscape, particularly in terms of how we now talk and think about matters of educational concern. As Harris (2007) points out, neoliberalism itself is a multifarious term, in part to do with the complexities under which it was first established, the

influences it derives from other socio-economic theories such as classical liberalism, and the knock-on effects it has had on society as a whole. Neoliberalism has been referred to in both positive and negative senses by various parties – politicians, academics and, indeed, anti-capitalist activists (Holborow, 2015, p. 8). More recently, there has been widespread activism against neoliberalism, including the Occupy movement, the union protests against the marketisation of universities in the UK, and reactions to debt repayment of Greece in Europe, to name a few.

Broadly speaking, neoliberalism is based on the belief that free markets are best served for economic growth at both societal and individual levels (Harvey, 2005). These markets should remain unregulated such that individuals have the ultimate purchasing power, with competing service providers incentivised to improve their quality as a result. Although the market is decentralised, the state will intervene in order to create and sustain the conditions necessary for it to flourish. This ultimately involves the state imposition of market mechanisms on various aspects of social, political and economic life, such that neoliberalism can be understood in macroeconomic terms but as also embedded in individual norms and behaviours. Since these mechanisms are then replicated internationally, a global market is thus created by which transnational competition thrives (e.g. Mooney Simmie and Lang, 2020).

As suggested by its name, neoliberalism emerged from 'liberalism', an earlier economic theory that was pioneered by thinkers such as John Locke. Unlike its 'looser' connotations today, liberalism has a specific economic and political vision, which also criticises the excessiveness of governmental involvement in the lives of individuals (e.g. in terms of private property rights). Similarly, it therefore advocates for the creation of an unregulated exchange of goods and services. As Ozga and Segerholm (2015) point out, choice is key in both theories, not only for individual freedom, but as a necessary component to encourage entrepreneurialism and competition. In neoliberalism, there is an additional concern with making sure that individual choices are 'informed', and thus, neoliberal societies tend to focus on cultivating the skills necessary for individual autonomy (Harvey, 2005). This then explains its relationship to new public management - the state taking a managerialist stance in relation to service providers, where the responsibility for quality is devolved not only to the level of providers, but also the informed or 'empowered' consumer.

Neoliberalism also arose from what was regarded as the failure of the Keynesian welfare state, the latter of which represented an attempt to marry capitalism with labour ideology. One aspect of this was a greater distinction between the private and the public sector. For Keynes, public goods include the right to education, leisure, work, citizenship, and an adequate standard of living. Rather than adopting a *laissez faire* approach, governments intervened in order to ensure that these areas were secured for all (Harris, 2007). Unlike the neoliberalist conception of a deregulated market, the Keynesian welfare state was therefore more concerned with striking a balance between 'the interests of capital and the collective entitlements of (some) citizens' (Ozga & Segerholm, 2015, p. 28). It involved a negotiated but centralised system for creating and implementing public policy, and a statist approach to the guarantee of public goods such as education.

Following a period of economic stagnation in the 1950-60s, the 1970s saw a severe economic recession in the West that called into question welfarist economics, particularly in the USA and in England (Mooney Simmie, 2012; Fitzsimons, 2017). In some circles, there were criticisms of public expenditure, now seen to be inefficient, overly bureaucratic, and a barrier to economic growth. Whilst also seeing education as a vehicle for social change, neoliberalism considers it as 'a means collectively to deliver economic growth and social stability and individually to achieve personal emancipation and relative socio-economic advantage' (Harris, 2007, p. 10). The education sector during this time, however, was seen to be ill-equipped in dealing with the rising levels of unemployment. Progressive teaching was

criticised for not developing a system based on rigorous accountability and high academic standards. James Callaghan's Great Debate in 1970s England, for example, called for an education system that was more responsive to the needs of industry, with greater school autonomy on the one hand, but with greater regulation of teacher training on the other (Great British Prime Minister, 1976). This (indirectly) influenced a number of educational reforms globally and involved a shift in attitudes towards education, including *who* should have a say in its aims and purposes, particularly in the context of the Republic of Ireland (Mooney Simmie, 2012).

Neoliberalism is supported in the academic field by important thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama in the United States and, albeit to a lesser extent, Anthony Giddens in the United Kingdom. During the 1980s, Fukuyama controversially wrote about the end of the Cold War and the rise of neoliberal capitalism as marking the 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 2006). These ideas were nurtured in the political sphere at the time through the Clinton administration in the United States, who predicted that this 'end of history' would be followed by a period of unprecedented global economic growth. Much of the intellectual lineage of neoliberalism relates to the so-called modernisation theorists, who like Fukuyama, argued in favour of optimal individual wealth and freedom. The neoliberal turn, however, concerns the idea that the free market is the source of this personal freedom and wealth, and thus, neoliberal capitalist contexts such as the United States were valorised in his writings as being the pinnacle of social development (Coulter and Nagel, 2015). Giddens (as cited in Coulter and Nagel, 2015, p. 4) supports this idea, claiming that:

> …capitalism, for all its flaws, represents the form of social organisation that affords the individual optimal wealth and the opportunity to transcend the restrictions of traditional or collective identities. In particular, the rapid evolution of information technology has 'disembedded' individuals from their locale, allowing them a 'biographical autonomy' that entails the freedom to ignore the strictures of class, nation or ethnie in order to construct bespoke identities out of the myriad of possibilities afforded in an ever more 'globalised' world.

Indeed, neoliberalism is a global project[1], but it is also a project directed towards the individual in many respects (e.g. Mooney Simmie, 2012). Theoretically, where public services are seen to be more efficiently run through private business models, and where the population are asked to pay less tax, they are therefore able to have more control over their income, are more likely to spend, and thus directly contribute to the growth of the economy through fostering competition and consumerism. Nevertheless, it appears that for many authors, the neoliberal project has not been as successful in reality as it may seem on paper. According to Harvey (2005, p. 21), this is because neoliberalism contains 'enough contradictions… to render evolving neoliberal practices (vis-à-vis issues such as monopoly power and market failures) unrecognisable in relation to the seeming purity of neoliberal doctrine.' This, of course, is not to forget the environmental devastation that has been perpetuated by neoliberal consumerism (e.g. Castree, 2010). Moreover, the very idea of freedom that is propagated through liberalised market economics is, in fact, fictitious (Fitzsimons, 2017). The market is never really 'free' but rather, has led to a substantial growth in inequalities from 'top earners' to those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Not only this, but the promotion of a free market economy has brought about the displacement or 'redefinition of professionalism as an organising principle for the performance

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[1] For example, the rise of international finance through transnational organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation means that, markets across the world are forced to open themselves up to the global economy, and often particular policies are put into place in order to foster greater competition between states.

of public sector services' (Grek and Lindgren, 2015, p. 31). In place of this comes principles of new public management. Since public sector services are seemingly unresponsive to the needs of the market, they thus require a form of management that would 'eliminate the ossified and compliance-centred behaviours embedded in public sector bureaucracies', replacing this with more client-oriented, transparent and innovative systems. This, in turn, has led to a number of well-documented issues in the education sector, one of which is the rise in inspection systems. Many authors have admonished these for their role in undermining professional autonomy through an erosion of trust, in (paradoxically) increasing bureaucracy, in changing the very nature of the teacher-student relationship, and in creating problematic models of teacher performativity that arise due to the ways in which teacher accountability is measured (e.g. Ball, 2003; 2012; 2016a; Mooney Simmie, 2012; Mooney Simmie *et al*, 2017; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2019; Mooney Simmie and Lang, 2020; Perryman *et al*, 2006; 2017; 2018). Despite this, neoliberalism is widely attractive for many economies, including the Republic of Ireland.

1.2 Neoliberalism in Ireland: The 'Third Way'

The move towards neoliberalism in the Irish context was arguably more practical than it was ideological (Allen, 2000). Historically, Ireland has very much taken a 'centrist' approach. The appearance of neoliberalism in Ireland might also be seen as emergent rather than fully-fledged, and because of the somewhat ambiguous concoction of European social democracy with American neoliberalism (Kitchen *et al*, 2012), the socio-economic and political context of Ireland has been characterised by certain politicians[2] as somewhere between 'Boston and Berlin' (Fischer, 2014). Some argue, however, that this centrist approach merely provides a front behind which neoliberalism can flourish unhindered (e.g. Allen, 2000).

There are also several socio-historical aspects particular to the Irish case that have allowed neoliberal thought to prevail. Firstly, since the British colonial conflict specifically involved disputes over land ownership, the very concept of the individual's inalienable right to property has been central to Irish capitalism. Secondly, the conflict has also allowed for a 'clientistic and patronage species of politics' (Kitchen *et al*, 2012, p. 1304), with an emphasis and triumph of local politics over national ones. This personalised form of voting means that Irish society is amenable to decentralisation, a key neoliberal idea. Thirdly, the two major political parties in Ireland – Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael – differ mainly, if not only, in terms of their historical anti/pro-treaty positions[3]. Both are catch-all, neoliberal parties that have therefore left very little in the way of alternative political discourse (until very recently). Finally, since embracing a more open and global-facing economy in the late 1980s, the Irish state is heavily reliant on foreign direct investment, an economic model that is sustained by the neoliberal politics of other nation states and organisations, including the EU and the USA.

Both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael claim to align themselves neither with the left nor the right side of the political spectrum, instead advocating a 'third way'. Similar to New Labour in the UK (Blair, 1998), this involves a combination of democratic socialism and economic liberalism. Like New Labour, the neoliberal model in Ireland is also strongly connected to a

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[2] Mary Harney, the Tánaiste of Ireland in 2000, remarked that the Irish economic model was in many ways more similar to the American one, characterised by the 'rugged individualism of the original frontiersmen… heavily based on enterprise and incentive, on individual effort with limited governmental intervention.' But it also shared some similarities with Europe, being 'built on a strong concern for social harmony and social inclusion, with governments being prepared to intervene strongly through tax and regulatory systems to achieve the desired outcomes.' For further discussion on this, see Fischer (2014).

[3] Following the Irish War of Independence, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921, which eventually led the establishment of the Irish Free State. It culminated in the Irish Civil War waged until 1923 between anti- and pro-treaty factions, the latter of which was supported by the British Government.

'modernisation' agenda. Writing in relation to the Irish context, Allen (2000, p. 6) argues that modernisation political theorists see 'the key factor in economic development [as] changes in the internal value system [of nation states]'. Modernisation is generally conceived of as a linear progression starting from an industrialisation period characterised by a fatalistic value system which, once transformed, allows for greater economic growth. For example, such value-system changes encourage individuals to take more risks, in turn increasing the entrepreneurship required for the provision of goods and services. Mass consumption then ensues, further stimulating industrialisation and economic growth, eventually benefitting all members of society – or so the theory goes.

Modernisation theorists were especially influential in the US during the Cold War era in the 1960s, such as the previously cited Francis Fukuyama. They were not without criticism, however. Radical new ways of thinking about the economy and about the political sphere effectively rejected the 'grand narrative' of trickle-down neoliberal economics. Nevertheless, partly in response to the waning influence of the Catholic Church, as well as attempts to 'transcend those forms of traditional nationalism' that arose with the end of British rule in all but one province on the island, the idea of 'creat[ing] a modern prosperous society in which the individual can enjoy a range of personal freedoms' (Coulter and Nagel, 2015, p. 26) flourished in the Irish context. This 'post-nationalist nationalism' was ultimately defined by liberalism, with a shared belief in the power of capital for (re)generation, the necessity of society to modernise, and, above all, to secure the unassailable sanctity of the individual.

The Celtic Tiger and the Social Partnership Scheme
Until the 1990s, Ireland was a 'relatively poor and peripheral state, perched on the edge of Europe, with a weak indigenous economy and a foreign direct investment (FDI) sector characterised by low-skilled, branch-plant manufacturing' (Kitchen *et al.*, 2012, p. 1302). Since the early 1990s, however, the economy experienced a surge with a rapid shift towards high-skilled manufacturing, a huge growth in the service industry, population spurts, a housing property boom, and the development of a strong consumerist society. Ireland was commended internationally during this time as a 'beacon of what the deep liberalisation of a small open economy might deliver' (Kitchen *et al.*, p. 1302), a country with an 'impressive national spreadsheet' (Fitzsimmons, 2017, p. 10), and with what the OECD once described as one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Allen, 2000). In many ways, this so-called Celtic Tiger era signalled the beginnings of the neoliberal state in Ireland (Fitzsimons, 2017).

The implementation of the now defunct 'social partnership' scheme in the late 1980s was seen as key to the economic growth during this time and is also representative of the 'modernising' aspect of neoliberal ideology. This was an initiative established in order to deliberate on, create and implement public policies related to national pay agreements, health, social care, and education. It also sought to deal with a number of socio-economic issues at the time, including staggering levels of unemployment, sustained losses in trade union memberships, and a weak minority Fianna Fáil government who sought to gain support from both businesses and from the working and middle classes. As we have seen, Fianna Fáil are often characterised as 'catch-all' party, and thus attract support across demographic divides through advocating economic interventionism in order to correct market failures as well as promoting welfarism in a socially liberal framework. The establishment of the social partnership scheme was therefore in line with this 'third way' approach, decentralising accountability to allow for a flourishing 'free market' whilst also protecting vulnerable social groups, thus seemingly appeasing both ends of the political spectrum (Doherty, 2011).

Indeed, whilst labour market actors such as trade unions and businesses made up a large proportion of the social partnership groups, there also included the 'Community and Voluntary' pillar who, on paper, had an equally prominent voice (Teague and Donaghey, 2009). Because

industrial relations in Ireland were often antagonistic, the idea that this distinctive style of socio-economic governance could be sustained over a long period of time was of interest to many global policymakers (Doherty, 2011). As such, much research was conducted in order to see the extent to which this form of socially-inclusive governance could lead to all of the things the Celtic Tiger was seen to exemplify – industrial stability, rapid, substantial growth in employment levels, and broader wealth creation for the country as a whole.

As a form of participatory governance, social partnerships are also seen as a way to deepen democracy through encouraging more active civic engagement (Gaynor, 2011). They have both political and instrumental value, (theoretically) allowing for more effective policies based on relevant, localised knowledge, whilst at the same time developing capacities that are conducive to balanced or 'rational' forms of democratic deliberation. Through this, civic associations could acquire the skills thought to allow for greater social stability, such as the proper analyses of information, the use of evidence in decision-making, as well as learning how to compromise through consensus. Partnerships are hailed for increasing levels of critical public reflection (Hendricks, 2006) whilst also developing public capacity for scrutiny, thus mobilising the public sphere as a whole (Baccaro, 2006). Indeed, in the 2000 White Paper, the *Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*, the Irish state characterised its involvement in the social partnership not 'as the answer to every problem, but as just one player among others'. In doing so, it could decentralise responsibility, encouraging 'people and communities to look after their own needs' (Government of Ireland, 2000).

This scheme also mirrored developments in the education sector during this time. As Mooney Simmie and Moles (2016) note, the Catholic Church has long played a significant role in educational provision in Ireland[4], and as such, the education sphere was often deemed to be a sanctuary free from state involvement. Teachers enjoyed high levels of public trust, 'where the moral discourse of education took precedence over the instructional' (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2016, p. 4). Following the economic downturn of the 1980s, coupled with a report by the OECD (1991) that called into question the outdated pedagogical approaches in Irish schools, efforts were made to encourage greater collaboration between the state and education providers. Given that education was considered as vital in attracting foreign direct investment that would eventually lift Ireland out of an economic crisis (Allen 2006; Mooney Simmie, 2012), such collaboration also had economic purposes in mind. As we will see below, this eventually led to a more hierarchical system of regulation, particularly with the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2001.

Whilst the social partnership scheme certainly opened up discussions and improved the often-fraught trade union-employer relationship, it was not without its flaws. In the context of Irish governance, representative democracy has always been key, whereby the ultimate decisions to either discard or implement policy recommendations by social partners rested unilaterally on the state. This was nowhere more visible than in the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008. After a series of seemingly successful negotiations aimed at tackling the banking and housing crisis, it appeared as though the social partnership arrangement could provide sustainable solutions that would not result in heavy austerity measures. At the last minute, however, fearing revolts from Fianna Fáil backbenchers, the then-current prime minister Brian Cowen introduced an emergency budget which put into effect massive pay reductions across the public sector, as well as austerity measures in resources to education and healthcare, much to the dismay of key union activists. Ultimately, this unilateral movement on

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[4] According to the report on the *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector* in 2012, the vast majority of primary schools in Ireland (around 90%) are under the patronage of the Catholic Church (DES, 2012b).

behalf of the government ended the social partnership scheme in its then-current form, and showed a number of weaknesses that had not, perhaps, been evident until then (Kelly, 2010).

Doherty (2011) argues that this decision demonstrated the government's pragmatic rather than ideological commitment to the social partnership process. This again highlights key aspects of the Irish political climate that can be characterised as 'third way'. Crucially, it has always been the case that, through the partnership arrangement, none of the recommendations for policies or reforms would be legally binding. Interestingly, during the crisis of the 1980s, the weak minority government sought social partners to aid in socio-economic issues that would affect both the public and the private sector. But in 2009, they chose instead to 'effectively ignore the social partners and focus [their] attention almost exclusively on banking, and latterly, fiscal crises' (Doherty, 2011, p. 376), demonstrating the purely voluntary nature of the arrangement[5]. All of this serves to give merit to what the so-called 'incorporation' theorists argued about the entire scheme in the first place – that, rather than adhering to the notion of true and equal partnerships in the search for fairer and more equitable socio-economic policies, partnerships were really just a way to '[demobilise] union resistance to employer interest' (Doherty, 2011, p. 377).

Throughout the process, there were also ongoing tensions between participant groups both within pillars and amongst the entire partnership body as a whole. As Gaynor (2011) points out, the quality of deliberation in such participatory schemes is mired by three related factors that in turn mitigate against the democratic vision they are purported to represent. These include the push for consensus, the issue of factions, and communication norms that shape the level of influence of civic associations within pillars. It seems that social partnerships fail to account for the pluralistic nature of modern democracies, where power relations between different groups limit the extent to which the process is based on an equal recognition of actors. So-called rational discourse often trumps other forms of communication, and thus privileges certain groups in terms of their capacities for persuasion and influence. There were clear distinctions between different communication norms in the social partnership groups – those that advocated more 'rational' or 'professional' forms of debate, and those who preferred more emotive or overt forms of protestation. Although the Irish model is often commended for moving away from purely corporatist interests, it is in these communication norms that its corporatist roots are ever clearer. According to members, the bargaining and negotiation tactics employed by the more influential group members were described as 'hard-nosed' and 'macho' (Fitzsimons, 2017). There was often a lack of transparency in these negotiations, with bargaining taking place in 'informal, hidden arenas', and thus, not open to the genuine dialogue that is supposed to underpin the process as a whole. And with an increase in 'frustration, antagonism, and animosity' (Gaynor, 2011, p. 509) over time, sustaining these deliberations was also a challenge, and increasing fragmentation of groups meant less collective negotiation powers as a whole, particularly from those in the 'Community and Voluntary' groups.

Social partnerships also fail to account for the conflictual nature of society at large, and the overly rationalist view of the public sphere is by its very nature exclusionary. So, whilst in theory, deliberation potentially allows for these issues to be addressed through 'building shared understandings [and] solidarity' (Gaynor, 2011, p. 506), the focus on consensus built into the institutional framework of social partnerships, in fact, inhibited the process as a whole. Since any concern brought to the negotiation table required consensus, they often arose out of the special interests of the more powerful within that pillar, resulting in the silencing of other issues or, indeed, alternative discourses (Gaynor, 2011). This is not to suggest that the deliberative democracies in the form of social partnerships can *never* work, nor that they are somehow 'bad'

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[5] This voluntary nature of social partnerships could also be seen from the perspective of employers, with foreign multinational corporations commonly refusing to engage in the social partnership process since it meant having to negotiate with trade unions (Fitzsimons, 2017).

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or 'useless' (e.g. Mooney Simmie and Lang, 2020). But it *does* suggest that, where consensus culture and the 'third way' reign, genuine dialogue – and the necessary contestation that this invites – is dangerously overlooked. According to Gaynor (2011, p. 513), 'in the absence of alternative discourses, voices, and interests, appeasing the international markets is… the sole focus.' For this reason, certain authors, such as Allen (2003), have strongly argued that the social partnership scheme in Ireland was merely a way in which to appease and thus silence otherwise dissatisfied groups. Interestingly, similar criticisms were also raised in relation to the school-state partnerships that appeared during the Celtic Tiger (e.g. Mooney Simmie, 2012). This social partnership model not only represents the characteristic lack of commitment of the Irish government when it comes to its own ideological position. It also functioned as a way to ensure the creation an open economy, one that was attractive to the foreign direct investment, where neoliberal capitalism could therefore flourish (Allen, 2000).

Over time, the social partnership model 'became a cloak behind which deep inequalities were ritualistically named and then largely ignored' (Lynch *et al.*, 2012, p. 7). Challenges to neoliberal orthodoxies were often given mere token recognition. And yet, neoliberalism itself plays a 'seductive tune' (Mooney Simmie, 2012, p. 489), with the likes of the Celtic Tiger being seen as a 'rising tide [that] would lift all boats' (Allen, 2000, p. 1). Both the Celtic Tiger and its aftermath radically reshaped Irish society, and, as Fitzsimons (2017) argues, the solutions proposed in dealing with its eventual demise were also neoliberal in nature. Ideas that seem to be superficially beneficial appear to have problematic assumptions, expectations and aims underneath, and a distinct lack of appraisal of these policies thus impeded any movement away from neoliberal models (Lynch *et al.*, 2012, p. 10). Arguably, this is very much how third way political movements function – by encouraging actors to take on a certain 'language' or 'communication norm' in order to be heard, they thereby perpetuate exclusionary forms of accounting for issues. And by selling ideas so as to appease both sides of the political spectrum, debate can effectively be neutralised. This, of course, is the very opposite to what deliberative democracies are supposed to represent.

Winds of change?
Much of the consensus-focused political climate in Ireland has been challenged more recently, however. One key example of this is the 2018 referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment[6] allowing women in the country access to abortion services for the first time in the history of the nation. Before then, Ireland had one of the strictest laws when it came to abortion, with services denied in all cases unless there was a direct danger to the life of the women, an exception only introduced in 2002 (Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, 2019). Women who travelled for abortions were only permitted to do so without fear of prosecution since 1992, leading to a long history of secrecy and shame. The campaign was highly emotional and fraught, premised on apparent societal divisions that seeped into the family unit. Judging by the referendum results, however, which saw 66.4% of voters opting to repeal, the public was perhaps not as divided as various media outlets had portrayed (McDonnell and Murphy, 2019). Nevertheless, it seemed that for many families, an open and honest discussion of such issues surfaced for the first time. In my own experiences of growing up in Ireland, there was a certain anxiety and discomfort around overly serious or political forms of debate, the fear of 'falling out' with family members or with friends, of going against the grain in some sense, of speaking about things that should otherwise remain private and hidden.

But after the 2012 death of Savita Halappanavar, the debate on abortion erupted once again in the public sphere. Savita had suffered an incomplete miscarriage, but despite repeated

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[6] The Eighth Amendment stated that: 'the State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right (Article 40.3.3 in Government of Ireland (1945)).'

requests for an abortion, the presence of a foetal heartbeat meant that doctors were unsure of whether or not to perform the life-saving surgery. Shortly afterwards, she died of septicaemia. Her death sparked a wave of public outrage, with the involvement of transnational bodies such as the ECHR calling upon Ireland to change its abortion laws (Erdman, 2014). Online social media outlets such as 'In Her Shoes' began to anonymously share stories of a stark and unprecedented number of women who had attempted abortions or had travelled to procure one for an extremely complex variety of reasons (De Vere, 2018). And although the proposed changes to the abortion laws were decided via a Citizens Assembly prior to the referendum itself, it is arguably more so these emotional and personal accounts that secured the repeal vote. Norms of communication in political discourse in Ireland has shifted considerably in that sense (Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, 2019).

This short example shows that the so-called consensus-driven politics based on 'rational' discourse is no longer as prominent in Ireland in more recent years, that overt protestation and activism premised on political emotions is becoming more so the norm. Indeed, communication norms that epitomised the social partnership scheme - ones that privileged certain groups over others - are being challenged in this way. After the Great Recession of 2008, people began to take to the streets in order to protest against austerity measures, the most prominent example being the proposed introduction of new water charges (Fletcher *et al.*, 2018). In 2020, the election results also demonstrated a potential breakdown of the 'third way' political climate, with the left to far-left republican party Sinn Féin securing the most seats.[7] The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic also, in many ways, enters into public discourse new challenges to the socio-economic structure of the country as a whole, with the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, regularly commenting on the need for 'radical thinking' in terms of what society might look like once the crisis eventually ends (e.g. Horgan-Jones, 2020). It seems that in moments of crisis, where certainty and security no longer prevail, people are thereby stimulated into questioning these issues at a system level. And yet, this is not necessarily true of the current education system, one that is still very much circumscribed by neoliberal ways of thinking. This is not to say that in the future this will not be challenged, and the winds of change that have enveloped the country post-2008 certainly signal this to be a real and immediate possibility. For now, let us turn to a closer examination of the connection between the current education system in Ireland and neoliberal thought.

1.3 Neoliberalism and Education

Neoliberalism in education has in part been perpetuated through transnational organisations such as the OECD, particularly through their PISA, TIMMS and PIRLS research. PISA, for example, has a policy-oriented function, aiming to help education systems of participating countries improve their 'system outputs' whilst also increasing marketization through competition on a global scale. The 'epistemic dominance' (Mooney Simmie and Lang, 2020, p. 2) of these supranational organisations mean that there is often 'little room for alterative voices' (Todd, 2016, p. 621). In turn, there is also an increase in transnational policy-borrowing, with various countries modelling their education systems on 'what works' elsewhere (See, for example: Smeyers *et al.*, 2006; Biesta, 2007; 2009; Simons, 2014; 2015; Mooney Simmie and McKenna, 2017). The kind of terminology that accompanies these 'what works' policies have in turn resulted in 'instrumentalist thinking' (Harris, 2007, p. 5) in the education sector, particularly in terms of how we account for teaching and learning practices. As Richardson (2010, p. 485) remarks, such attitudes not only exist on a societal level, but have

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[7] At the time of submission, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail alongside the Green Party, have formed a coalition and are now the leading parties in Ireland. Although reactions to this has demonstrated some public outcry, little has been done, quite possibly due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that makes public forms of political activism difficult to organise.

also seeped down to the level of the classroom, where, for example, 'the strong marketisation of education [results] in an emphasis upon largely summative testing, particularly the 'high-stakes' examinations that often seem to be at odds with the educative purposes of classrooms in a broader sense.'

With many countries categorising themselves as 'knowledge-based economies', education is therefore seen as essential in ensuring a viable and well-trained workforce, since this in turn becomes key to improving and sustaining the economy. Neoliberalism is closely connected to human capital theory in this regard, where economies rely heavily on the 'educatedness' of their workforce in part to compete with the wider global market (Mooney Simmie, 2012; Mooney Simmie *et al.* 2017; Mooney Simmie and Lang, 2020). With this comes a 'new orthodoxy', with educational policy '[colonised]… by economic imperatives' (Mooney Simmie and McKenna, 2017, p. 320). In line with this, national systems of education have become reliant on educational 'outputs', something particularly problematic in that 'the 'economic' value of a mark or grade dominates any appreciation of personal or social values, those which are more difficult to measure' (Richardson, 2010, p. 475). This thereby pushes the need for monitoring systems in order to ensure that the standards of 'educatedness' are being met. Since the late 1990s in Ireland, a rise in neoliberal language in educational policies reflect this - the notion of 'accountability' measured through educational outcomes and quality control systems (e.g. Hislop, 2012), the terms 'customer and clients' appearing to influence the conception of being a student[8], and changing the name of the 'Department of Education and Science' to the 'Department of Education and Skills' in 2009, further emphasising the necessity of developing prescribed skills in order to increase the employability of students with a view towards economic growth (Lynch *et al.*, 2012).

During the early years of the Celtic Tiger, the traditional 'theocratic' approach to schooling was admonished for being economically unsustainable (OECD, 1991; Lynch *et al.*, 2012). In 1996, for instance, the *Civil Service Management Act* lead to the establishment of the 'Performance Management and Development System' which marked an increase in the use of neoliberal language appearing in both policy documents and in wider public discourse (Government of Ireland, 1996a). The managerialist approach can especially be seen in relation to public sector accountability, now measured and reinforced through benchmarking and various forms of pay-related performance (Harris, 2007). In turn, de-regulation has also increased in the Irish educational sector, perhaps most notably through the provision of initial teacher training, where thousands of teachers are now trained through private providers (Holden, 2010). Not only this, but the content of teacher education has also changed in line with these neoliberal trends, moving from a 'seminaristic' to 'technocratic' approach involving a set of prescriptive learning outcomes for teaching graduates, an emphasis on evidence in order to demonstrate this, and an increasingly reductionist view of teaching such that it can be 'measured' in this way (Mooney Simmie and Edling, 2018). Increasing focus is therefore placed in 'performativity' of graduates, 'side-lining… the complex nature of meaningful professional learning' (Mooney Simmie *et al.*, 2017, p. 516).

An offshoot of this is the standardisation of the language in terms of how we account for teaching and learning. This echoes the standardisation of the norms of communication evident in social partnerships, reinforced through third way, consensus-driven politics. The 1998 Education Act, for instance, contains a strong 'market-led discourse', resulting in a 'technocratic and managerial view of teaching' (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2016, p. 4). New neoliberal legislation appeared during the Celtic Tiger Era and in the wake of the Economic Recession. This included the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2001, a now decentralised statutory body whose stated purpose is to 'promote and regulate professional

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[8] See, for example, the 1996 policy 'Implementing Agenda for Change' (Government of Ireland, 1996).

standards in teaching, [acting] in the interests of the public while upholding and enhancing the standards in the teaching profession' (Government of Ireland, 2001). A managerialist lexicon continues to be central to educational reform and practice, with the increased use of terms such as 'target-setting', 'performance' and 'quality standards'. Another is the term 'effective' (See, for example, DES (Ireland) 2016a; 2016b), which takes a hard-lined stance in terms of the measurement of improvement (See, for example: Goldstein, 1997). Importantly, in order to understand teaching and learning in this way, a 'science is relied upon to rationalise these social systems', preferably 'packaged as easy to install techniques' (MacNamara *et al*, 2008, p. 41), proliferated through an efficient and well-structured inspection system.

Simplistically put, there are two competing ideas for best practice in inspection systems. On the one hand, certain inspection policies are a part of wider, 'high-stakes accountability' systems manifested through, for example, the controversial formation of league tables. These systems are neoliberal in a more overt sense, since their focus is specifically on fuelling competition between education providers. On the other hand, inspection can also be focused on increasing the quality of educational provision in schools through what is called 'smart regulation' (Hislop, 2012) or 'intelligent accountability' (MacBeath, 2006). This involves some level of internal review in which schools and their teachers can investigate both the strengths and weak points of school practices and apply corrective methods to address any shortcomings. In the case of Ireland specifically, this emphasis on the provision of educational quality through school autonomy and capacity-building is evident in *School Self-Evaluation* policies, as the next chapter will explore.

1.4 School Self-Evaluation as a Social Partnership
The purpose for my considering school self-evaluation is that it encapsulates the dialogue-focused, consensus-driven attempts of Irish governance explored in this chapter, most notably in the case of social partnerships. As we have seen, this focus on consensus may appear to be desirable in many respects. And yet, the hidden power relations that exist within such partnerships, and the asymmetry by which this relationship is defined, makes their purported value questionable. For one, the partnership model was in part defined by and has allowed neoliberal thought to flourish, not only at the level of economic politics, but also at the level of the individual. In many ways, the same could also be said of school self-evaluation, particularly in the language it encourages teachers to adopt in the accounts of their practices.

Indeed, in school self-evaluation, teachers function as 'social partners', a partnership that includes all those towards whom they seen to be accountable – the wider public, the state, social, political and economic institutions, their students and the wider school. In self-evaluation, a consensus-driven approach is taken in the formulation of the school's development plan, for example, given that this must include the views and interests of all relevant stakeholders. By considering school self-evaluation from this angle, the next chapter aims to expose three fallacies that both it and the wider third way movement exemplify: the possibility of a truly balanced approach to autonomy and accountability; the problematic assumptions in relation to common forms of communication; and finally, the focus on evidence that results in a 'technicist' language of education such that alternative modes of accounting for teaching are severely limited.

2

The 'Third Way':
## School Self-Evaluation in Ireland

2.1 What is School Self-Evaluation?

Partly because of the influence of new managerialism and partly as an attempt to overthrow some of the negative perceptions of inspection systems in general, many education systems are now looking towards a 'third way' in the evaluation of teachers and schools. This has been referred to in different ways – 'intelligent accountability' (Miliband, 2004), 'smart regulation' (McBeath, 1999; 2006), 'responsive regulation' (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2007; 2008; Hislop, 2012), 'robust evaluation' (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). In each case, a combination approach involving 'bottom-up' internal evaluation with the support of 'top-down' external inspection is taken, although this balance has been calibrated differently across contexts.

One of the most famous proponents of school self-evaluation is John MacBeath, who most saliently thematises the benefits of this approach in his work, *Schools Must Speak For Themselves*. Written in 1999, it became popular around the same time that *Whole School Evaluation* was piloted in Ireland. MacBeath was also influential in the 2004 'new relationship with schools' in England, an initiative introduced by New Labour. The hope of fostering this 'new relationship' involved the promotion of self-evaluation as both an effective cost-saving measure and as useful in retaliating against the destructive strains between the government and schools following an era of Thatcher. Dissolving such tensions did not mean that the government would be 'soft on teachers' (Miliband, 2004), but it would at least allow for some level of greater school autonomy - or so it was argued (Brady, 2016). MacBeath (2006) himself was widely critical of the ways in which this version of self-evaluation had been implemented. He was concerned with the inert political agenda that he saw as central to Miliband's attempts to 'build bridges' with schools, paradoxically coupled with governmental cuts to public services, increased marketization, and greater levels of institutional accountability through the discourse of quality assurance. MacBeath especially took issue with the seeming role reversal that this amounted to, where most schools and teachers implemented a practice that was more akin to 'self-inspection' than 'self-evaluation'.

Echoing much of the vocabulary used by MacBeath ten years previously, the Chief Inspector of Ireland, Harold Hislop, proposed a new regime of self-evaluation in Ireland in 2012. Both Hislop and MacBeath claim that the balanced approach of 'smart regulation' would lead to more intelligent institutions, since this would in part require evidence-based approaches in order to consistently implement a framework for both internal and external evaluations. By introducing a dual system of self-evaluation and external inspection in this way, a balance of autonomy and accountability could be ensured. Self-evaluation in Ireland is perhaps best explained by the 'responsive regulation' pyramid (see: figure 2.1) illustrated by Braithwaite *et al* (2007; 2008) and adopted by both Hislop (2012) and the National Economic and Social Council of Ireland in relation to school inspections.

Figure 2.1: Pyramid of Enforcement Strategies (reproduced from Braithwaite *et al.*, 2007, p. 97; 2008, p. 316).
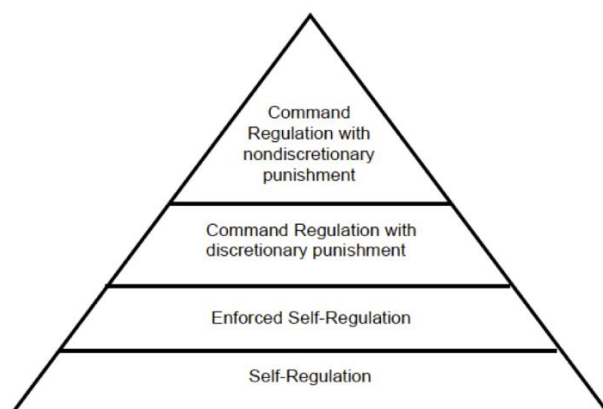
Other self-evaluation proponents such as Nevo (2002) argue that self-evaluation not only persuades organisations to self-regulate for sometimes punitive reasons. It also ensures that improvement occurs along the lines of pre-established standards, in which all actors are keenly aware of what they are being judged on and are able to use such judgements to conceptualise 'tools' necessary for their own self-evaluative purposes. Allowing schools to 'speak for themselves' (MacBeath, 1999; 2006) involves much more than merely voicing subjective preferences. Rather, it is a continual process that is embedded into the very culture of the school, rigorously based on evidence, formative in character, and truthful in the ways in which strengths and weaknesses of school practice are identified.

According to the OECD (2013, p. 406) report *Synergies for Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, nearly every EU country has some form of school self-evaluation, with the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union making it a clear recommendation for improvement purposes in 2001. The report provides an overview of the different ways in which self-evaluation is implemented, including key pointers with regards to how it should be properly approached. These include not only building capacities, but also the necessity of measuring student outcomes through standardised testing in order to provide data for self-evaluations, and to use such evaluations for both formative and accountability purposes. Indeed, self-evaluation requires considerable expertise – 'conceptual or technical' skills such as an understanding of the language of evaluation, as well as know-how in disseminating and utilising data necessary for evaluating practices in the first place (Ryan *et al.*, 2007). Schools and their teachers need to be able to develop their own 'evaluation instruments' to manage large amounts of data, as well as finding the necessary time and resources to do so.

Perhaps for this reason, a TALIS survey in 2008 found that only 11% of teachers asked were implementing self-evaluation on an annual basis in Ireland. Indeed, many schools adopted a 'minimalist compliance' approach at that time, thus failing to provide teachers with 'an optimal self-evaluation experience' (O'Brien, McNamara and O'Hara, 2014, p. 169). Some have noted a (not unhealthy) scepticism when schools are faced with the prospect of using data for evaluative purposes (Biesta, 2007; O'Brien *et al.*, 2014; 2015; 2019). Many authors have also argued that Irish schools are simply 'poor at performing adequate and rigorous forms of research for self-evaluation purposes', at 'operationalising core concepts' (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014), and at constructing the relevant instruments necessary to come to valid and informed conclusions. Although it is often argued that encouraging more participation with important stakeholders (most notably teachers) leads to a more committed and genuine approach, this

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alone is not enough. There also needs to be extensive training in the use of evidence for evaluative purposes, building the capacity for schools and teachers in order to ensure that such processes are 'built-in' rather than 'built-on' (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014). It is with this in mind that the more recent policy literature on self-evaluation in Ireland has been enacted.

2.2 School Self-Evaluation in Ireland

The origins of inspection systems in Ireland can be traced back to the 19th century, corresponding to the start of mass education (Brown et al, 2016; Ó Cúlacháin and O'Donavan, 2009). These systems of inspection were centrally regulated and were more concerned with compliance rather than improvement. For many decades since then, inspections appeared to be virtually non-existent, or at best, were sporadic in nature (O'Hara, 2012).[1] But with the increasingly prevalent belief that educational quality is linked to economic prosperity, new regimes of school inspection were gradually introduced in the country, most notably during the Celtic Tiger era in the 1990s (Mooney Simmie, 2012).

As it currently stands, Ireland takes a so-called 'balanced approach' in its two-tier system of evaluation. External inspections are conducted primarily through the mechanisms of *Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning* and *Subject Inspections*, as well as *Incidental Inspections* and specific evaluations targeting DEIS[2] schools and other centres for education (DES, 2016f). Internal evaluations – the focus of our discussion here – is done primarily through *School Self-Evaluation* (DES (Ireland) 2004; 2012a; 2016b; 2016c). Since 2011, the Irish inspectorate has abandoned 'cyclical' external evaluations, instead focusing on risk-based ones. This involves applying 'various modes of judgement to target deviant cases falling outside the realm of acceptable quality indicators' (Brown et al, 2016, p. 140), and is considered to be a cost and time-saving measure. Importantly, the 'scanning approach' used to identify these schools consists in looking at existing school data as well as the annual school self-evaluation report.

Like many inspection regimes globally, the system in Ireland has become enmeshed in wider debates around public sector accountability and the improvement agenda, as well as new public management in education (Mooney Simmie, 2012; Grek and Lindgren 2015). According to Hislop (2012), a system which relies on public sector autonomy must also face greater levels of public scrutiny and accountability. Nevertheless, the balance of school self-evaluation in Ireland appears to be tipped in favour of the internal. Indeed, many authors argue that Ireland's system of evaluation is 'low-stakes accountability', more 'improvement-oriented' than punitive (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014; 2015; 2019). This is evidenced by the fact that, unlike England, there are no official league tables of schools[3], and whilst external inspection reports are published online, the general sentiment appears to be more focused on developing capacities rather than developing a culture of competition between education providers.

Whole School Evaluation (WSE) was first piloted in the late 1990s and more firmly established in 2005. It had been successful in increasing the frequency of school inspections, of encouraging greater partnership between the state and teachers, and in introducing a culture of self-review. Nevertheless, inspections remained sporadic and inconsistent for some time. This is because, according to Hislop (2012), these inspection models…

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[1] There are some differences here in the experiences of primary and post-primary schools. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will primarily be on post-primary level, but similar policies apply also at primary level.

[2] 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools', an initiative launched as part of the government's 2005 'Action Plan for Inclusion', functions as a 'policy instrument to address educational disadvantage'. DEIS schools are those that have been identified as catering to disadvantaged communities in Ireland (DES, 2005). This has since been updated in the Department for Education and Skill's (2017a) *Action Plan for Education.*

[3] Except for those compiled unofficially by media outlets, such as the Irish Times.

> …included many non-essential features, and they proved to be far too elaborate and time-consuming.… [meaning that] the Inspectorate could not deliver sufficiently frequent inspections nor could hope to produce published reports on schools with sufficient regularity.

This was also supported by the work carried out by McNamara and O'Hara (2008), *Trusting Schools and Teachers*, who also criticised the inefficient nature of self-evaluation processes up until that point, coupled with a lack of necessary professional development given to teachers and schools. Indeed, before 2012, several issues with the requirements of school self-evaluation meant it failed to take hold, including:

> …the unrealistic extent of the framework itself; the lack of required data collection and evidence generation to support schools' statements about their strengths and weaknesses; lack of clarity about the status of the final reports and the responsibility for following up on issues identified; and finally the role of the key stakeholders, particularly parents and students, in the process (NcNamara and O'Hara, 2012, p. 276).

Both Hislop (2012) and McNamara and O'Hara (2008, p. 31) thus called for a streamlined version of the inspection system, '[s]horter and more efficient models' that would also be more appealing to teachers, thus fostering ongoing commitment. More external support was offered through online resources, training, as well as through external inspections (O'Brien *et al.*, 2015). The new *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines* in 2012 were still extensive, and yet they offered a much-simplified version of the WSE framework that came before. When the *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines* and the *Looking at our School* (LAOS) evaluation frameworks were re-fashioned in 2016, the criteria were simplified even further. And now with risk-based evaluations, inspections in Ireland have been made even more efficient (O'Brien *et al.*, 2015). Yet, some have argued that the introduction of WSE and the subsequent developments in inspection thereafter represented a 'Trojan horse for changing the system from inside' (Mooney Simmie, 2012, p. 498) towards more neoliberal concerns, much like the social partnership scheme explored in Chapter 1.

Another weakness of WSE identified by both Hislop (2012) and McNamara and O'Hara (2008) was the lack of trust in self-evaluation, particularly by external inspectors. It was seen as insubstantial and unreliable, based purely on subjective opinion rather than rigorous and objective 'hard evidence'. Since 2012, the inspectorate sought to resolve this issue through three routes, each of which are linked to an increasing 'professionalisation' of teachers. Firstly, it sought to create standardised criteria for both internal and external reviews through LAOS (DES, 2016a) (See: Appendix 1). According to Hislop (2012), with greater levels of transparency comes greater need for consistency across both approaches, and thus the need to balance accountability with autonomy became key in this. A second route involves supporting and training teachers and schools undertaking self-reviews. This is done through establishing a culture of self-review that involve the adoption of a certain way of speaking about practices consistent across schools and external inspectors, one that is also translatable to the public domain. Finally, since, according to Hislop (2012),'[t]he most effective educational systems have good levels of quantitative and qualitative data', ensuring that teachers and schools use appropriate forms of evidence to inform their evaluations is seen as necessary, alluding to the seeming need to remove subjective judgement as much as possible from the process. Again, the adoption of a common language across both internal and external reviewers is key in this regard. Let us now consider each of these three aspects in turn, including the potential problems that arise not only in terms of practicalities, but in terms of the way in which they account for the practice of teaching.

The Balance of Accountability and Autonomy[4]

For Nevo (2002), internal evaluation allows schools to formulate and manage their own expectations for improvement. But since schools are by and large public entities, some measure of accountability needs to be in place. Hence, there is widespread agreement amongst self-evaluation proponents that internal evaluation is best supported by external review (See, for example, OECD, 2013). Whilst accountability is important, it has nevertheless been controversial in education circles for quite some time. Indeed, accountability systems have paved the way for neoliberal forces to be ever more present in schooling, as we have seen in Chapter 1. But where external inspections are viewed as an intrusive burden on the school in this sense, its cohabitation with internal review means that resistance to inspection will be greatly diminished (Nevo, 2002).

This is one explanation for the adoption of self-evaluation in Ireland. Indeed, when *Whole School Evaluation* was first being considered and piloted in Irish schools, 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; Mooney Simmie, 2012). This in turn forced the Department of Education to take a more 'cautious' approach (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; 2012). As stated in the Teaching Council Act (2001), self-evaluation 'delegate[s] downwards responsibility for teachers to become self-regulating' (Mooney Simmie, 2012, p. 497), and thus aims in part to alleviate anxieties for individuals involved in inspections, despite the fact that school leaders, teachers and learners are central to what is being evaluated (Brady, 2019a; O'Brien *et al.*, 2019).

Self-evaluation is not only promoted as something which can reduce teacher resistance to evaluation, but also as that which raises the levels of trust towards the self-evaluation process from the wider public (DES, 2016a; 2016b). Through inculcating a capacity-building approach, such as training teachers in data collection and analysis, self-evaluation ultimately means that teachers are more professional, objective and efficient in the evaluation of their own practices (McNamara and O'Hara, 2007; 2008). As a result, they, and the wider public, no longer need to be concerned about the rigor of the process itself. Increasing trust in this way is even more evident in recent years where external inspections are only undertaken where there is perceived risk, a conclusion that is drawn in part from the school's annual self-evaluation report. Such capacity is measured not only in terms of how much time and resources each school has to conduct self-evaluation, but also in terms of the extent to which they demonstrate their 'evaluation literacy', involving particular ways of speaking about their practices that are evidence-based, conducive to ongoing evaluation, and translatable to the public domain.

The balanced approach to inspection is representative of the 'third way' climate that, as we have seen, characterises the Irish socio-political context. Like the two main political parties in Ireland, school self-evaluation is a 'catch-all' concept, one that attempts to incorporate multiple views on why and how to evaluate schools with the aim of building consensus. On one side, we have those who see evaluation as a means of holding schools and teachers to account. Undeniably, this is done on the basis of a particular view of what schools and teachers ought to be doing. Implicit in the descriptions about effective practice is the assumption that schools should be accountable not only to individual students, but to society at large. For example, their role is partly to produce a qualified workforce, but also individuals who are active citizens equipped with the skills to make rational choices about their own future and, by extension, the future of the nation (NCCA, 2015). The further scrutiny that such accountability

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[4] Importantly, when I refer to accountability here, I am referring to its 'technical' definition (as it is most commonly construed in policy, for instance), one that is often positioned in contrast to the notion of 'autonomy'. But accountability can also have wider meanings related to the ways in which one offers an account of themselves in a more fundamental sense, one that does not, in fact, imply a tension with autonomy in the same way (See, for example, Standish, 2020). I return to this in Part III.

involves is justified by appealing to the other 'side' – i.e. those that see the purpose of self-evaluation as enabling teachers and schools to be more autonomous in their judgements. The question arises, however - if the criteria by which teachers and schools evaluate themselves are externally generated, and if every judgement made needs evidence in order to show that practices align with such standards, then what, precisely, do we mean by autonomy?

According to Mooney Simmie and Moles (2019, p. 383), teacher autonomy involves the 'capacity of teachers to facilitate risk and make ethically informed local judgements'. And yet, the alleviation of anxieties through adopting a balanced approach in evaluating teachers, alongside the standardisation of evidence-based language in both internal and external reviews seeks to avoid risk and uncertainty as much as possible. Self-evaluation requires teachers to reduce risk by reducing their practices to a 'system of codes, rules and regulations', performing their own evaluations as 'actuarial selves' (Mooney Simmie, 2019, p. 385). But risk, as we will later explore, is an essential component of education.

Perhaps one could argue that autonomy is not naturally given but rather, is something that must be cultivated. Often it is thought that building both the capacity and confidence of teachers and schools enables this. Studies (e.g. McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; O'Brien *et al.*, 2019) have shown that there is a sense of 'empowerment' that comes with this capacity to harness data in service to judgements, and that this sense of empowerment therefore leads to greater levels of commitment to the process. The bottom line, therefore, is that by empowering teachers to use data, they *will* use data, and the implicit assumption here is that using data is, in fact, the only 'rational' way of making judgements about one's practice. And who would argue against empowering teachers?

Hence, self-evaluation becomes easier to implement with 'empowered', capable teachers, in turn garnering greater levels of participation and commitment to the process as a result. What such policies have achieved, therefore, is an appeasement of teachers and of schools who otherwise might have resisted inspections in the first place. Their anxieties have been pacified through this language of empowerment, and this very same empowerment (e.g. to use data) has also appeased those who see self-evaluation as being too 'soft on teachers' (Brady, 2019a). This leads to a consensus, meaning that any alternative forms of discussion – or, indeed, of accounting for oneself as a teacher – are neutralised as a result.

Developing a Culture and a Common Language
Since self-evaluation does not come 'naturally' to schools, relevant policy literature emphasises the need to create a culture where it becomes an ongoing and routine practice. This is especially true of models that involve data-collection, target-setting, and an engagement with the whole school community, since these were neglected in the past (McNamara *et al.* 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2011; O'Brien *et al.* 2015). One of the ways in which to create a culture of self-evaluation is to standardise how it is put into practice. In Ireland, self-evaluation is a specific, six-step process outlined in both the 2012 and 2016 *Guidelines* (see: figures 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5). The six steps are modelled on the methodology of action research, first identifying a specific area of inquiry, 'where… [the] school might profitably explore the potential for improvement' (DES (Ireland) 2016c, p. 13) and then working through a series of steps that ultimately lead to the implementation and monitoring of an improvement plan. Throughout, consultation with the externally generated framework, *LAOS* (2003; 2016) is necessary. This framework presents a 'unified and coherent set of standards' (DES (Ireland) 2016b, p. 7) for the two dimensions, namely teaching and learning, and management and leadership (See Figures 2.5 and 2.6). It also indicates what kinds of evidence might be used for the formation of judgements. These include both quantitative and qualitative kinds, with the aim to ensure that, above all, such evidence is 'manageable, useful and focussed' (DES (Ireland) 2016c, p. 13).

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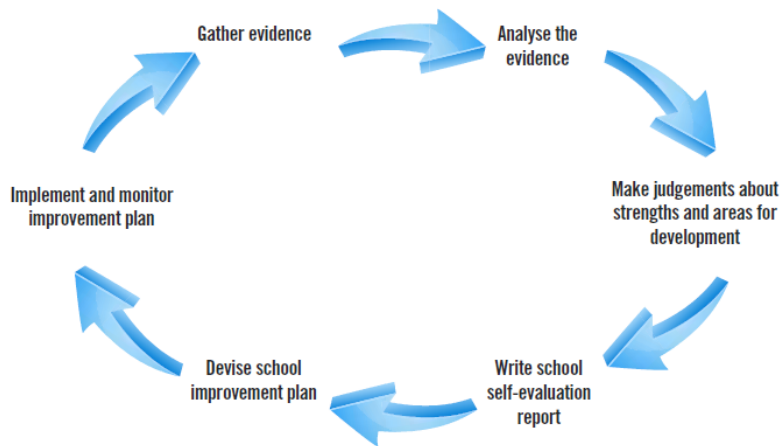Figure 2.2: The Six-Step Self-Evaluation Process (DES (Ireland) 2012a, p. 4).

Figure 2.3: The Quality Continuum from the 2012 Self-Evaluation Guidelines (DES (Ireland) 2012a, p. 31).
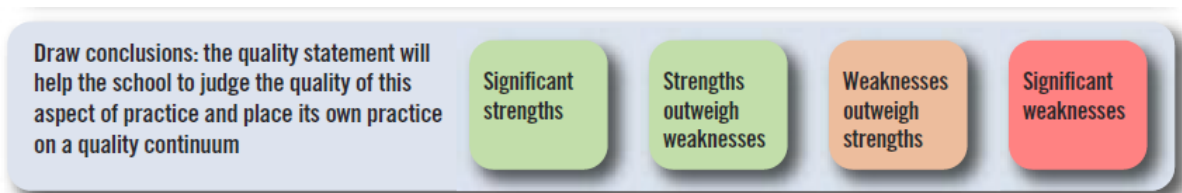
Figure 2.4: The Six-Step Self-Evaluation Process (2016) (DES (Ireland) 2016c, pp. 11-12).

Figure 2.5: The Six-Step Self-Evaluation Process (2016) (DES (Ireland) 2016c, pp. 13-14).

	TEACHING AND LEARNING			
Step 1: **Identify Focus** Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 3	Consider the Quality Framework overview Identify the domain most relevant to your school			
Step 2: **Gather Evidence** Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapters 4 and 5	Learner outcomes	Learner experiences	Teachers' individual practice	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice
	Investigate your area of focus			
Step 3: Analyse and make judgements Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 4	Not effective Highly effective			
	Evaluate the effectiveness of your current practice using statements of practice			
Step 4: Write and share report and improvement plan Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 6	Record your findings and develop your school improvement plan			
	Share a summary of this record with the parents and school community			
Step 5: Put improvement plan into action	Actions at class level Actions at subject department level and at year level Actions at school level			
Step 6 **Monitor actions and evaluate impact**	Changes in practice Teacher experiences Students' experiences Impact on learning	ADJUST AS NECESSARY		

In the more recent version of the *Guidelines,* each domain is accompanied by a particular list of standards described as 'the behaviours and attributes characteristic of practices in an effective, well-functioning school' (see: figure 2.6) (DES (Ireland) 2016b, p. 8) Each standard is elaborated with 'statements of practice', namely, 'effective' and 'highly effective' (e.g. see: figures 2.7 and 2.8). Effective and highly effective statements are placed side by side to make measuring and comparing different levels of quality simpler and more efficient. According to the *Guidelines*, it is only once such quality judgements are made that plans about what to do to improve can be created, implemented, and monitored.

Figure 2.6 Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools – Overview (DES (Ireland) 2016b, p. 12).

	DOMAINS	STANDARDS
TEACHING AND LEARNING	Learner outcomes	Students: enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme
	Learner experiences	Students: engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning
	Teachers' individual practice	The teacher: has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intention and the students' learning needs responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary
	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice	Teachers: value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise

Figure 2.7: Domain 1: Learner Outcomes (DES (Ireland) 2016b, p. 13).

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners	Students' enjoyment in learning is evident and is often linked to a sense of making progress and of achievement. Their engagement with learning contributes to their sense of well-being. Students are motivated to learn, and this is often linked to having a clear sense of attainable learning outcomes. Students see themselves as learners and demonstrate this in their positive approach to classwork and homework.	Students' enjoyment in learning is evident and **arises from** a sense of making progress and of achievement. Their engagement with learning contributes to their sense of well-being. Students are motivated to learn **through having** a clear sense of attainable **and challenging** learning outcomes. Students see themselves as learners and demonstrate this in their positive **and reflective** approach to classwork and homework.
Students have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand themselves and their relationships	Students demonstrate a knowledge, appropriate to their stage of development, of their own behaviour as individuals and as members of a group. They can apply this knowledge to manage situations, and to support their well-being. Students have the skills to modify and adapt their behaviour when required.	Students demonstrate a knowledge, appropriate to their stage of development, of their own behaviour as individuals and as members of a group. **They apply this knowledge thoughtfully** to manage situations and support their well-being. Students have the skills to modify and adapt their behaviour when required, **and recognise the need to do so themselves.**

Figure 2.8: Domain 3: Teachers' Individual Practice (DES (Ireland) 2016b, p. 17).

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.

The framework provided in *LAOS* (DES, 2016b) is comprehensive, and whilst interpreting the statements of (highly) effective practice might differ across contexts, the method itself is seen to be universally applicable. Standardising the practice of self-evaluation is seminal in creating a 'common language… for discussing what is working well and what needs to be improved' (DES, 2016a, p. 22), through which both teachers and the wider public can 'transcend the terminological difficulties which almost inevitably emerge whenever individuals working in different settings begin to communicate' (DES, 2016a, p. 23). This so-called 'cultural change' also helps to create a 'genuine sense of accountability to the school community', where all stakeholders are considered as 'critical friends' in the school development process. In short, it ensures that is everyone on the same page, and that all have access to the discussion around what teachers should (and should not) be doing. This, in turn, further alleviates some of the aforementioned anxieties around self-evaluation being too 'soft on teachers', and seemingly leads to better teaching and learning practices overall (Hislop 2012; 2017; Brady, 2019a).

Undoubtably, this common language portrays a technicist understanding of teaching and learning, and the relationship between both. It also involves a 'simplistic model of accounting' (Mooney Simmie, 2017, p. 312) that focuses only on that which is measurable. The term 'effective', for instance, is used almost exclusively throughout the entire body of policy literature, harking back to two key paradigms in school evaluation research – namely, school effectiveness and school improvement. 'Effective' assumes a causal relationship between teaching and learning. Simply put, there is an assumption that when professionals do

something – intervene, administer treatments – they achieve certain effects (Biesta, 2007). If the effect is achieved, then we might call the intervention 'effective'. The problem with this is that effectiveness only measures what is instrumentally valuable – it does not say anything about what *ought* to be brought about. Nor does it say anything about the ethics of the intervention itself. For example, one of the statements of highly effective practice is that 'students achieve the intended learning of the lesson or sequence of lessons, which has been appropriately differentiated where necessary' (DES, 2016c, p. 17). Let us imagine that this was evidenced by the cohort of students exceeding the teachers' expectations in their grades. And let us imagine that the intervention was to have students learn only what is intended to be learned for that reason, so much so that they do not have the space to question the content and what they are being taught, or perhaps so much so that it takes an enormous and unhealthy mental toll on students. Would we then say that the lesson is effective? The issue that researchers such as Biesta (2007) highlights is that an emphasis on evidence brings about the 'technological model of professional action', one in which the only values in education considered are the instrumental ones, and not the more fundamental or 'ultimate' values that underpin *why* we want to achieve this result in education in the first place, and how our interventions might align with or go against our core beliefs about what is *educationally* valuable. As Bonnett (1994) points out, before conceptualising 'standards' in an abstract sense, such as those that are applied in the (self-)evaluation of teachers, a discussion around what it is that we value in education in a more ultimate sense needs first to have taken place.[5]

The issue, of course, is that these ultimate aims are notoriously difficult to establish. They require an 'openness and uncertainty', and yet, mechanisms such as school self-evaluation seem to be 'incapable of ambiguity' (Todd, 2003, p. 34). Ambiguity is erased through codified norms of communication, replaced instead with a view of the teacher as 'disinterested and dispassionate… focused on providing hard evidence of success in the classroom by way of student achievement' (Mooney Simmie *et al*, 2017, p. 508). And despite school effectiveness proponents stating that the term 'effective' signals correlation rather than causation between teaching and learning processes, their vocabulary is very much characterised by a simplistic and linear understanding of what this relationship is constituted by (Blake *et al.*, 2000).

Ironically, whilst the Irish model of self-evaluation is often seen to be much more improvement-oriented, it nevertheless expects that evaluative judgements be identified and measured in line with what is (in)effective in this 'technological' sense, and might in fact be considered reductive by those in the school improvement camp. As we have seen, evidence-based judgements attempt to remove ambiguity by making themselves 'teacher-proof' (Bonnett, 1994, p. 8), ultimately implying that what is valuable is that which is effective, and therefore that which has some kind of measurable impact. This is an idea that is alluded to in several of the *Self-Evaluation Issues* released by the inspectorate, most notably where it is stated:

> …learning how to measure what you value is essential if you are to be confident that school improvement has happened. And, while school improvement sounds impersonal, what it actually means is that teachers can be certain their work has a positive impact, and students can experience a sense of pride in the real, measurable progress they have made (DES (Ireland) 2013b, p. 3)

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[5] Bonnett (1994) is referring specifically to the 'standards' of learning in relation to the so-called 'basic' skills necessary for life outside school – for instance, the 3Rs. A similar argument applies in the context of teaching. These standards contain implicit values that signal an understanding of the nature and purposes of education in a fundamental sense, but also what kinds of 'basic skills' are to be understood as essential in the first place.

Related to this technological model of teaching are specific terms such as 'quality statement' and 'quality framework', terms that also have neoliberal underpinnings (Mooney Simmie and McKenna, 2017). In the context of the *Guidelines* and *LAOS*, both have precise and technical definitions, i.e. as that which relates to evaluation (sub)themes and standards of (highly) effective practice. Even though these statements of (highly) effective practice may be used flexibly, they still provide a relatively fixed point upon which both judgements and targets can be based. In the *Guidelines*, frameworks are presented as a way to enable 'schools to evaluate teaching and learning in a systematic and coherent way' (DES (Ireland) 2016c, p. 16), allowing them to 'quickly gauge' what elements of practice require closer investigation. They serve as 'valid benchmarks' (DES (Ireland 2016c, p. 22) which, if used consistently, lead to more accurate judgements of quality. Not only this, but they provide 'real clarity about what is important'. There is an assumption here that not only is it vital to record and articulate what is going on in the classroom, but that to do so accurately requires a certain kind of technical language that subscribes to a problematic model of teaching and learning, as explored more fully in subsequent chapters. But also, this technical focus is myopic in many ways. As Blake *et al.* (2000, p. 8) remark, 'technology uniquely has the power to displace other possible ways of revealing the world to us, and it fosters the illusion that things can be viewed in their totality… overcoming the stubborn resistance of things to facilitate access into a world that, in losing its recalcitrance, loses its depth.'

Like social partnerships, the norms of communication that self-evaluation requires demonstrate inherent power dynamics, where a certain form of communication is privileged over others. This technicist sense in which we talk about teaching and learning is reductive in many respects, but what is perhaps even more worrisome is that, in its myopia, it becomes the *only* way in which it is appropriate to talk about such practices. Indeed, the cultivation of a common language and a common culture of self-evaluation makes these technical ways of accounting for practices difficult to call into question. In turn, it promotes the idea that all of these practices are measurable, in turn ignoring those important aspects that are not, and as Biesta (2007) argues, instead of measuring what we value, we value only what we can measure.

The Focus on Evidence
In a similar line of thinking, Coe (1999) argues that the use of evidence-based language to inform judgements about oneself is crucial. Otherwise, public policy would merely be guided by unfounded opinion, and therefore open to all sorts of misuse and abuses of power. With evidence, it is easier to hold people to account for what they say, and also for what they think. Even though he agrees that the notion of 'evidence' itself is not unproblematic, he nevertheless asserts that '[e]veryone believes in the value of evidence and surely no one is against it.' This is in line with other proponents of evidence-based education (e.g. Hargreaves, 1996), who call for teaching to become a research-based profession. Similarly, other influential figures in self-evaluation policy (e.g. MacBeath, 1999; McNamara and O'Hara, 2008) argue for an 'action research' approach to the evaluation of one's own practice. But it is not *any* research approach that is undertaken – specifically, it is premised on 'what works.'

In light of this, many proponents argue that self-evaluation should not be considered in any way less rigorous than external inspections, since it too relies extensively on the use of evidence (e.g. McNamara and O'Hara, 2007; 2008; 2011). Evidence not only ensures more accurate judgements, but it also relates to the question of balancing autonomy and accountability, since its use can appease those concerned about schools and teachers being too 'subjective' or 'biased' in portraying their own strengths and weaknesses. It seems somewhat common sense that judgements are not fully realistic or sound unless they can be substantiated. Indeed, the prevailing sentiment is that teachers and schools should at least rely on a level of 'baseline data', a yardstick by which they can measure the actual and desired levels of
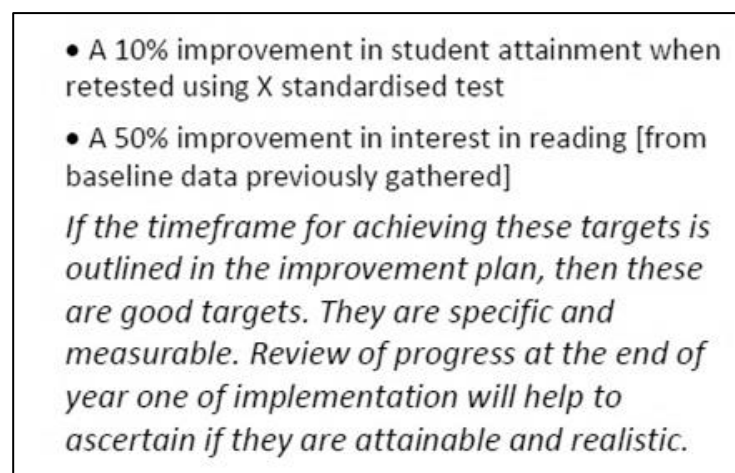
attainment of pupils, as well as students' motivations and dispositions (DES (Ireland) 2013b). According to the Inspectorate, the use of evidence in conjunction with evaluation criteria allows schools to:

> …gauge how…teaching and learning compares with standards of best practice. Unless you measure 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 (Ireland) 2013b, p. 2)

Indeed, from the outset, the 2012 *Guidelines* call for a use of 'solid evidence to inform the discussions that teachers have about teaching and learning' (DES (Ireland) 2012a, p. 3), both within the school and beyond it in conversation with the wider public. Although he shared anxieties with measuring learning solely in terms of assessment data, Hislop (2012) argued that such system information would allow for schools to benchmark performances, and in identifying 'unexpectedly high or unexpectedly low levels of student performance' (Hislop, 2012), it could also motivate risk-based inspections. Increasingly, standardised testing in numeracy and literacy has been used in schools for this purpose (O'Brien *et al.*, 2019). But since assessment results are insufficient in providing actual levels of performance, school self-evaluations also need take account of other forms of evidence, such as continuous assessment and more qualitative forms of data.

Evidence should not only be used to form accurate judgements about 'where' schools and teachers are now, but also in order to formulate targets for improvement (DES, 2016a; 2016b). Targets must be SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. Often this translates as 'numerical', as we can see in Figure 2.9. All targets should have corresponding success criteria, defined as 'measurable outcomes', without which it would be seemingly very difficult to 'know if the targets have been achieved' (DES (Ireland) 2014a, p. 4). Interestingly, as Richardson (2010) notes, it is not just teachers and schools who see the value in numeric targets as more precisely indicating how the school is doing, but students too have similar attitudes when it comes to their own learning.

Figure 2.9: Sample Target from the 'Self-Evaluation Issue' (DES, 2014).

> • A 10% improvement in student attainment when retested using X standardised test
>
> • A 50% improvement in interest in reading [from baseline data previously gathered]
>
> *If the timeframe for achieving these targets is outlined in the improvement plan, then these are good targets. They are specific and measurable. Review of progress at the end of year one of implementation will help to ascertain if they are attainable and realistic.*

The use of evidence is challenging, and it is by no means natural. As we have seen, it requires an initiation into a form of language that is, in many respects, alien to what teachers actually do on a day to day basis, not to mention their reason for becoming teachers in the first place (e.g. Wrigley and Wormwell, 2016). It seems inevitable that an identity clash of sorts arises, a disjuncture between their roles as teachers and their roles as 'researchers' and 'evaluators' (e.g.

Skerritt, 2018). Some authors (e.g. Confrey, 2008, p. 13) have suggested that teachers must acquire a 'statistical mindset' – i.e. a 'belief that statistical inquiry can solve classroom problems.' Yet different beliefs in the validity of data can hinder the extent to which it is used in self-evaluative judgements. As O'Brien *et al.* (2019, p. 3) note, 'teachers who believe in the use of data are more likely to incorporate it into their normal practices.' Ultimately, this means that teachers not only need to be trained in 'data literacy', to use complex terminologies that are distinct from ordinary language, but also to ensure that they do not develop negative attitudes towards data. Thus, training teachers to use data is not just about skills, but also certain dispositions and attitudes that would engender ongoing commitment to the process (O'Brien *et al.*, 2019).

As we have seen, with this emphasis on evidence comes the idea that teaching and learning is measurable in terms of 'what works'. Again, this concerns itself with a technological model of teaching (Biesta, 2007; 2009) based on problematic assumptions about cause and effect, objectivity and subjectivity, and fact and value, as we will explore in subsequent chapters. Surely there is little use in simply talking about 'what works' without first addressing what our values and purposes are for education, and what we understand by the role of teachers and, indeed, schools in light of these. Importantly, I do not want to suggest that such values should be decided in an *a priori* sense, since this seems to be one of the primary issues with the statements of effective practice. Rather, as I will demonstrate in Part II, values are made manifest through the course of actions, and are implicitly connected to how one responds to and accounts for oneself and the world.

This emphasis on evidence is not only harmful in the sense that it assumes things in education are measurable when, in fact, they are often not. It also assumes that such things *can* be articulated in some way, and that those articulations can then lead to some form of improvement. In order to explore this, let us expand the discussion to think about how it is that we recognise effective teaching practices, with the aim of disrupting this discourse in order that we may begin to think about how to account for such practices in a richer sense.

2.3 Recognising Effective Practice

Ultimately, the question that self-evaluation seeks to answer is if something is working in the classroom or not, and how to prove that this is the case. This, in turn, comes to be how effective practice is recognised, and by extension, the effective teacher. But the notion of recognition itself is multifarious. It can be understood in an everyday sense – my recognising a friend on the street, my hard work being recognised through praise – or, perhaps, in a more abstract sense – the legal recognition of same-sex couples, the recognition of a certain 'profile' of a suspect (Kocsis and Palermo, 2007; 2015). What philosophers such as Charles Taylor (1989; 1991; 1994) argue is that the recognition conferred on us by others is often constitutive of how we understand ourselves, and thus, it is important that we think through how a recognition of effectiveness in teaching can impact upon the role that the teacher herself adopts.

Arguably, the technicist frameworks through which we measure teaching is similar to the mechanism of 'profiling' and the kind of impoverished recognition this implies. In a more everyday sense, this involves encountering others purely in terms of the 'profiles' we have of them, thus also only thinking of them in terms of the expectations that these profiles suggest. But such expectations may not match with what is really going on, or who that person really 'is'. Since recognition also impacts upon how one sees oneself, profiling can limit the extent to which those individuals become something other than what their profiles suggest, as demonstrated by Fanon (1990), and as beautifully illustrated in Kafka's (2013) fictional story about 'Red Peter'. In both instances, one begins to account for themselves not only in terms of how they are recognised, but also in terms of how they *want* to be recognised, so much so that

they forget how to account for themselves – or indeed 'be' - any other way (Brady, 2019b; 2019c).

Effectiveness profiles exemplified throughout this chapter not only represent a clinical and overly reductive understanding of what being a teacher often entails, but also how teaching and teachers are recognised. Ultimately, recognition becomes understood only in terms of what we can measure, i.e. of what is *explicit*. But, as we have seen, how can one talk about educational effectiveness without considering the question of what educational practice is effective for (and, indeed, for whom)? And how do we expect teachers to be 'objective' about themselves without first taking this into account?

Seemingly, this idea of evidence-based self-evaluation is attractive, particularly to policymakers, because it is heavily practice-oriented, because it seeks to make things simpler and less ambiguous, and because it carries with it the assumption that it provides a neutral framework applicable to all contexts and situations. As Biesta (2007) rightly argues, what is also problematic is not only the particular view of professional practice that such frameworks encapsulate, but the fact that they appear to be 'common sense' and 'factual'. Since education does not just involve 'physical' interactions per se, but rather, 'symbolically mediated' ones (Biesta, 2007), it is therefore not as amenable to evidence-based practice as other fields are (e.g. medicine). It involves different actors – students, teachers – interpreting, or trying to make sense, of what is being taught. For this reason, it is inherently ambiguous – and so too the ways in which one might account for such practices.

Arguably, Bonnett (1994) also considers a richer conception of teaching and learning as against this technological model. In his book, *Children's Thinking*, he compares what he calls 'calculative' and 'poetic' modes of thinking, garnered from an engagement with Heidegger. Calculative thinking implies a form of scientism, where our interaction with the world involves manipulating what we encounter to our own particular ends, much like how modern manufacturing manipulates materials in order to make pre-designed objects into something effective, manageable. and useful. But our relationship with the world need not be this way – indeed, we can encounter the world without this manipulative motive in mind, but with an openness that Bonnett (1994) characterises as 'poetic' modes of thinking. Similar to how early craftsmanship involved working with rather than against the particular grains of wood, for instance, a teacher also participates in an interplay with 'materials' (students, classroom, curricula) who are *themselves* co-producers in the educative moment, thus entering into the picture an important and necessary unpredictability and complexity. Teachers are often thought of in the calculative sense, as human capital serving a pre-defined endpoint, whose practices are measured in accordance with these aims. And yet, they are also *humans* who respond to – and, indeed, *with* - the situation in which they find themselves, through whom the situation itself is brought to light. As Bonnett (1994, p. 79) remarks:

> Teachers cannot avoid making decisions about what to do… exhibiting values throughout the whole gamut of their behaviour, from their way of relating to children in general, to particular qualities of work they do and do not praise, to their approaches to discipline and class control, and so forth.

Indeed, the 'subjective weight' through which they make sense of these situations is unavoidable in many respects. But importantly:

> The value of poetic thinking lies not in specific tangible results or conclusions that follow logically from it, but rather from a place of attunement, place, and fittingness that it engenders, and within the ambience of which, the rational-calculative systems and arguments in terms of which we have become habituated into thinking of ourselves, need to be re-located in order for their broader significance to be understood and for them to be re-humanized in a deeper sense (Bonnett, 1994, p. 138).

With this in mind, to what extent might this richer – more *human* - conception of the lived experience of teaching call into question both the possibility *and* desirability of the technological accounts of practice?

2.4 Towards a New Account

Much of the criticism of school self-evaluation in Ireland has been focused on its practicality, related to the lack of time, resources and training offered to teachers (McNamara *et al*. 2006; 2007; 2011; O'Hara *et al*. 2007; O'Brien *et al*. 2015). Other criticisms focus on its overall usefulness for impacting practice (Ehren *et al*. 2013; Gustafsson *et al*. 2015). Some have argued that, despite clear direction from government policy, school self-evaluation is unrealistic and hardly ever implemented in the way it is envisioned (McNamara *et al.* 2006; 2005; 2009). Of course, there is also the concern that such information gathered through self-evaluation, and indeed through external inspection, may lead to the formation of league tables and the seemingly unhelpful culture of competition between schools (e.g. Ball, 2003; 2012; 2016a). Whilst the above practical issues are important, they do not address the implicit problems that self-evaluation is not only a part of but aggravates. But the problem with self-evaluation is not only the kinds of assumptions that underpin it. What is also concerning is what these assumptions *do* to our conception of teaching. Evidence-based education and measurement culture does not just assume that we can measure what it is that we value, nor does it just assume that things that happen in the classroom are easily captured or 'proven' by and through data. It also pushes the assumption that evaluations ought to *only* be based on evidence. It means that teaching should and can be technically verified, with normative questions about validity pushed aside.

As implied earlier, the aim of this thesis, however, is not to necessarily engage with the question of what constitutes good teaching. As stated in the introduction, it is to provide a space where new ways of conceptualising these practices can ensue, particularly in relation to the question of what it means to *be a teacher*. This, of course, has implications for being (in relationship with) a 'learner', but this will not be the focus here. In order to open up this line of thinking, I will now turn to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. I will pay particular attention to the accounts he offers of *being human* - how we exist and act on the world that we are thrown into, and how, through facing our ultimate freedom and ultimate responsibility, we are faced with the opportunity to account for ourselves in more authentic ways. In this sense, Sartre serves as a 'touchstone'[6] by which a new way to make sense of the lived experience of teaching is offered, and through which we can ultimately account for being a teacher in new ways. This thesis represents a commitment to the value that such accounts might involve – the anxieties and uncertainties, struggles and challenges, exposure and vulnerabilities, confusion and disorientation, so much of which is present and necessary in teaching. It is not an attempt to document these in order to raise awareness or to offer recommendations for alleviating them in the future. It is neither a romanticisation of the struggles of teaching that we often find in films and in literature, or indeed, in the rhetoric of 'what works' teaching policies. Rather, it values all of the challenges of teaching in and of themselves, as part and parcel of the act of teaching because they are *essential* to it, much as they are central to what it means to be human.

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[6] In *Fearless Speech*, Foucault (2001) calls Socrates as a 'touchstone' in that, rather than providing 'answers' to his questions, he encourages his interlocutors to pursue – and to take responsibility for – the answers they themselves provide. This will be explored more fully in Chapter 8.

Part II:

Sartre and Existentialism

3

An Introduction to Existentialism

3.1 Navigating Vocabularies

Existentialism is premised on a deeper exploration of what it means to be human. For some, the question of being human involves considering the essential characteristics that separate us from other animals - rationality or autonomy, for instance. This line of thinking is closely associated with philosophers such as Kant, who have deeply influenced strands of liberal philosophy of education, particularly those who see the primary purpose of education as the cultivation of such qualities (e.g. Marples, 1999; Standish, 2003; Kakkori and Huttenen, 2012). But as Bonnett (1994, p. 97) implies, what differentiates existentialism from this is its emphasis on the 'conscious life of the thinker', premised on the simple idea that each person 'thinks from out of the particular situations in which they find themselves'. In this sense, existentialism avoids taking an essentialist stance when it comes to the question of being human, instead considering the ways in which each individual defines themselves through an exercise of existential freedom 'which reaches beyond Kant's conception of will' (Kakkori and Huttunen, 2012, p. 352).[1] As explored in this part of the thesis, existentialism is therefore intimately tied to the nature and practices of teaching if, of course, we understand teaching as a fundamentally human endeavour.

The turn from the language of policy to the language of existentialism may be unsettling. Where educational policy documents tend to be clear, coherent and concise, they are also underlined by undeniable 'technicism' derived from problematic dualisms that existentialist thought seeks to disavow. Existentialist philosophy might also appear to be 'technical', given that it is often ripe with terminologies that jar with our everyday way of speaking. But unlike policy, its aim is not to reduce human experience to its simplest and most measurable format. Rather, the focus of existentialist thought is to expand our understanding of human experience through the creation of new terminologies that give access to previously unarticulated aspects of human life. Such stylised terminologies are required in order to call into question a range of problematic ideas that are ingrained in our everyday thinking – the subject-object distinction, the dichotomisation of fact and value, the separation of cognitive processes from engagement in action - so much of which is present in the more conventional accounts of teaching (e.g. Blake *et al.*, 2000; Standish, 2012; 2020).

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[1] Certain thinkers associated with existentialism – most notably Martin Heidegger – take issue with the correlation between humanism and existentialism. For Heidegger (2008), humanism still retains metaphysical claims – the idea that the human is simply an animal 'plus one'. In his 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger rejects Sartre's later claim that existentialism is a form of humanism because, for him, we must first know what being a human being *is* before we can offer any definition of humanism. This means that we must pay primary attention to the question of Being as presupposing any metaphysical account of being human. As we will see in Chapter 5, however, Sartre's association of existentialism and humanism is somewhat distinct from the metaphysical understanding suggested by Heidegger.

Hence, whilst existentialism is often defined from the outside in terms of a morbid preoccupation with death, anxiety, and indecision, it is perhaps better understood in terms of its distinctive 'grammar' (Levinas, as cited in Kneller, 1958) where, in re-appropriating language, it attempts to revolutionise our way of speaking about things we often take for granted. This both requires and evokes a radical shift in our perspective and understanding of human practices. As we will see throughout, this shift in perspective does not necessarily occur through reasonable and coherent argumentation, but through a style of writing that affects us in ways that the neatness of policy documents simply does not. It involves confronting difficult questions head on, despite the uncertainty and vulnerability this incites. By examining existentialist thought, it is thus not only important to do so with an instrumental view in mind (i.e. that it might be used for (re)conceptualising teaching), but to recognise that the difficulty lies not only in understanding such work in a technical sense, but also in uneasily accepting it as a possible vision for what our own lives might be.

Existentialism is sometimes thought to be a 'reactionary' philosophy, one that responds to certain crises throughout history. It does not focus on articulating these historical, social and political shifts at the macro-level, but the concrete, lived experience of individuals within these uncertain times. It is also not solution-oriented, nor concerned with 'what works' or what interventions might help to alleviate such crises. Its focus is not on training individuals to adjust by building their adaptive capacities or by equipping them with certain norms of communication that allow them to navigate the world accordingly. Existentialist approaches can, in fact, *cause* a crisis, the kind of crisis that is often a necessary turning point in order for us to radically re-evaluate what it is we are doing and, as Foucault (1990a) says, to rethink about what *what* we are doing *does*. Indeed, such crises are important since they inaugurate a moment in which 'we may begin to come to ourselves [and] seriously reflect upon the meaning of our own existence' (Bonnett, 1994, p. 106).

Existentialism is also defined more so as a 'philosophical attitude' rather than a systematic doctrine with easily definable tenets and beliefs. Perhaps the difficulty in thinking about existentialism as a 'system' of thought comes from our efforts to categorise thinkers across distinctive historical and intellectual contexts. Some might be called 'theistic existentialists', such as Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Marcel. Others rely heavily on an atheistic worldview, including many of the French existentialists who were writing around the time of the Second World War. Some philosophers who have been labelled existentialists have rejected the work of other existentialists, most notably Heidegger in relation to Sartre. Despite these differences, existentialism in general 'does not attempt to produce abstract general, 'objective' principles' but instead looks at the 'predicament of individuals in their unique lived situations… where [w]e must make our own choices' (Bonnett, 1994, pp. 98-99).

The primary focus of this thesis is on the early work of Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher who is perhaps most associated with existentialism and, indeed, was one of the only ones to adopt this term for himself. In this chapter, I will also look at earlier thinkers in order to delineate certain 'threads' of existentialist thought. I will then take us through some of the key ideas of Sartre that will be expanded upon throughout this section of the thesis. If we are to accept that so much of teaching is underpinned by these ideas, then existentialism may carve a way in which to account for these practices anew. I will allude to this throughout subsequent chapters, but particularly in the final section.

3.2 The Origins of Existentialist Thought

There is general agreement that existentialism began most explicitly in the 19th century with Kierkegaard (1813-1855)[2]. Kierkegaard was in many ways at odds with how philosophy had conventionally been done up until that point, his work often being characterised as unsystematic, fragmentary, and even paradoxical. But as Jaspers (as cited in Barrett, 1962, p. 12) once remarked, those who had '*really* experienced the thought of Kierkegaard… can never again philosophize in the traditional mode of academic philosophy'. Indeed, Kierkegaard's profound exploration of the inward life of the individual struggling for self-realisation did not cower away from questions of human finitude, the absurdity of the universe and our undetermined place within it, notions that would continue to be central in the 20th century existentialist movement (Barrett, 1962; Blakewell, 2016; Carlisle, 2019).

Kierkegaard (2009) was the first to use the term 'existential' in such a way that appealed to Sartre, in the cumbersomely titled *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments: a Mimical-Pathetical-Dialectical: An Existential Contribution*. One of his key contributions to existential philosophy was the reversal of the Cartesian dualism premised on the phrase 'I think, therefore I am'. For Kierkegaard, individuals are first thrown into existence by birth. Only *then* do we acquire a 'thinking thing' or something loosely synonymous with a 'self'. This 'self' is not something deduced via systematic forms of doubting, but rather, it is subject to constant re-engagement and renewal through our ongoing acts of choice as we navigate our existence - an existence, ironically, that we ourselves did not choose.

During his time, Danish society was experiencing a rapid transition from feudalism to capitalism, which in turn made available an unprecedented fluidity of possible identities, distinct from the more fixed sense of identity thought to be exemplified in societies where individuals were endowed with a pre-determined social status. At the same time, in order to meet the needs of capitalist society, there was also 'proliferation of normalizing institutions which produced pseudo-individuals' (McDonald, 2017). Kierkegaard was thus especially concerned with the so-called 'herd' way of life produced these institutions. As described by Taylor (1991), this 'inward turn' amounted to disenchantment and a disjointed form of selfhood, as well as the rise of instrumental reasoning confined to a narrow focus on 'ends' and 'outputs', reinforced by the 'soft despotism' of social institutions. In order to tackle this last point in particular, Kierkegaard needed a new form of communication in which pseudo-individualism could not only be called into question, but effectively dismantled. He is thus famous for his use of rhetorical techniques that allowed him to tackle the false consciousness of individuals in the 'present age' who 'dare not to be philosophical' (Barrett, 1962, p. 1; Kierkegaard, 2019;).

Kierkegaard sought to model the Socratic voice in his own work, and for this reason, his writings are latent with irony and satire, deconstructionist techniques that aimed to make conventionally accepted claims to knowledge untenable. Like Socrates, Kierkegaard also did not want to claim 'authority' over his readers, and thus distanced himself from many of his texts by writing under pseudonyms. Pseudonyms also allowed him to take strikingly contrasting positions, leaving his audience disorientated. But by employing this messy and often incoherent form of communication, he forced people 'back onto their own resources, to take responsibility for their existential choices, and to become who they are beyond their socially imposed identities' (Weston, 1994).[3] Ultimately, through both direct and indirect

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[2] Earlier philosophical approaches, however, such as the Stoics and Epicureans also saw philosophy as a way to ensure a 'flourishing life' rather than merely being an intellectual pursuit in and of itself, and thus in some sense exemplifies a similar approach to existentialist thought.

[3] This emphasis on the individual's authority over the interpretation of a text mirrored his stance on the Christian faith which, for Kierkegaard, was not something dogmatic. It must be repeatedly renewed, through belief which, by nature, is thought to be antithetical to reason.

forms of communication, Kierkegaard aimed at creating a 'double vision' in his reader, who could thus perceive the dialectical opposites in things – hope in hopelessness, strength in weakness – not with an aim to 'synthesise' these opposites, but to learn to exist more acutely in the awareness of the paradoxes that permeate much of our own existence.[4]

For Kierkegaard, the individual is free to the extent that they may make choices about how they live and, by extension, who they become. Such freedom is not liberating, however. It is the source of constant anxiety in one's life, an anxiety that both Kierkegaard and Sartre describe as 'the dizziness of freedom'. Akin to when we experience vertigo, this anxiety comes from the enormous amount of trust we must place in ourselves *not* to jump off the proverbial ledge, and the realisation that there is nothing to stop us from doing so except for ourselves. Anxiety comes to the fore when we are faced with certain moral dilemmas, from recognising both the enormous consequences of sin, but also the possibilities of individual freedom *to* sin. As such, our lives are marked by a disorientating choice of prudence and vivacity, where moral justifications for either do not exist in any *a priori* sense.

Similar ideas are also shared by Fredrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), another influential thinker in the existentialist movement. Nietzsche is perhaps most famous for his sustained and uncompromising critique of traditional European values, particularly those that come from religious institutions. His (1997) announcement that 'God is dead' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, for example, raises questions about how to proceed in a world where abstract values are no longer a 'requirement' for life. Nietzsche is also notable for his aphoristic, high-spirited and fragmentary style of writing, marked by persistent hyperbole and irony. Sometimes his aphorisms are constructed in the form of a mini-dialogue, where his own position is unclear. Because of this, an active engagement on the part of the reader is required, where one is ultimately responsible for their own thinking. He is a central figure in the revolutionization of philosophy and can thus be credited with influencing a large number of philosophers who came afterwards, including Sartre.

Like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche diagnosed a false consciousness that had permeated into the lives of individuals during his time, marked by the blind acceptance of received ideas and values. The aggressive statement that 'God is dead' does not mean that individuals are free in a 'liberated' sense. Indeed, their doubts about the viability of Christian belief in the face of this leads to a sense of anxiety, panic and disorientation (Nietzsche, 1974). Whilst some might argue that traditional moral values can be grounded independent of their Christian heritage, Nietzsche was not so convinced. For him, these moral values have lost their solid and unquestionable authority, and yet since they have so firmly and insidiously implanted themselves within individual consciousness, it would be impossible to remove them without causing further damage. In lieu of this, Nietzsche (2010; 2013) asserts the need for a radical overhaul of values – a 'revaluation' that involves a long and arduous restoration of ourselves, ultimately dismantling some of the more cherished aspects of our lives in the process.

For Nietzsche, it is the role of philosophy (and art forms) to evoke this revaluation of values. But like both Kierkegaard and Sartre, Nietzsche seems to succeed more so in his *via negativa* approach. Nevertheless, his 'meta-ethical' stance challenges the so-called 'common sense' view of philosophy, and instead promotes the idea that, ultimately, the act of valuing is a form of ongoing human creation. He (2010, p. 132) explores this in the *Gay Science*:

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[4] Kierkegaard was suspicious of Hegel and the idea that the world, through a series of dialectical oppositions, would gradually move towards harmony, a suspicion also shared by Sartre. But he does imply that human life goes through a series of dialectical 'stages', however, firstly beginning with the aesthetic, then the ethical, and then the religious stage. This is represented across many of his key texts, including *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling.*

> Whatever has *value* in the present world, has not it in itself, by its nature, - nature is always worthless: - but a value was once given to it, bestowed upon it and it was *we* who gave and bestowed! We only have created the world *which is of any account to man!*

Above all, Nietzsche (2010; 2014) valued 'freedom of spirit'. Like the later existentialists, this 'free spirit' is one who refuses to bow down to the 'herd morality' of their time. But the measure of a person truly depends on the fervour with which they remain committed to living and to life, and to a form of 'self-fashioning' in light of this. Whilst Nietzsche's own understanding of the 'self' is unclear, one interpretation might suggest that the self is something that *remains to be obtained*, as that which is continually (re)constructed throughout our existence as opposed to something 'given' in any innate sense. Individuals embarking on a project of 'self-fashioning' thus create these 'selves' through commitments to certain values that underpin their fundamental life projects. This, as we will later see, is central to Sartre's account of freedom and responsibility.

3.3 Existentialist Threads

Thus, both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche represent the foundations of existentialist thought with several of their ideas being essential for what Sartre and others would later write. And yet, as mentioned, existentialism itself is difficult to define it in any systematic sense. Perhaps, indeed, it is inherently *un*systematic given that its point of origin is the human person and their individual experiences. Having said that, there are some common threads amongst those associated with the term.

The Individual in a Disenchanted World

Most commentators agree that challenging times provide a fertile ground upon which existentialist thinking flourishes. Whether it be the fall of feudalism, the waning influence of religious thinking in intellectual circles, or the time before, during, and after the Second World War, most thinkers associated with existentialism have explored the question of what it means to be human in times of upheaval. Undoubtably, many have turned towards an exploration the individual's place within this so-called 'disenchanted' world. According to Weber, who popularised this term just before the First World War (Grosby, 2013; Weber, 2010), disenchantment is in part relates to a loss of pre-established 'destinies', corresponding to a rise in individualism where each of us experience the liberating but destabilising effect of the new-found freedom in defining oneself. Individual freedom is often seen to be the 'the finest achievement of modern civilisation' (Taylor, 1992, p. 12), and yet it is a Pyrrhic victory in many respects. For thinkers such as Weber, Marx and Taylor, the freedom of the individual in a disenchanted world is accompanied by a new kind of rationality, one that is exemplified in the likes of neoliberal capitalism. This rationality is based on 'calculat[ing] the most economical application of means to a given end' (Taylor, 1992, p. 5), where optimal efficiency becomes the ultimate marker of success. Now that older (e.g. 'superstitious') ways of thinking are obsolete, the world is thought to be more accurately and neatly defined and directed by scientific modes of thought. Of course, such changes are gradual, and the apparent upheaval that disenchantment characterises may be related to the general zeitgeist of an era (defined in retrospect) rather than the result of a sudden and radical overhaul of earlier ways of thinking.

Whether or not individualism is a blessing or a curse is not the primary focus for Sartre, but rather, what becomes of individuals in light of this 'inward turn'. The disenchanted world has allowed more freedom to call into question values that were once seen as having utmost authority in our lives, as well as those roles demanded and cultivated by society. But all of this freedom can be anxiety-inducing. It requires us to continuously revalue our own lives and to take responsibility for how it is that we live. Ironically, acknowledging the 'absurd' nature of

the world 'does not liberate: it binds' (Camus, 2005, p. 64). One common thread that may be said to characterise the 'existentialists' then is an acceptance of anxiety as an inescapable component being an individual in a disenchanted world, where pseudo-individualism proliferates, and where there is a constant striving for more authentic forms of individual expression in spite of this. It calls for individuals to commit themselves in certain life 'projects' and to take responsibility for these commitments, whilst also recognising the difficulty in doing so, particularly where the temptation of nihilism appears.

The Lure of Nihilism
Such a temptation is described in Albert Camus' (1957) Noble Prize-winning speech:

> These men [sic], who were born at the beginning of the First World War, who were twenty when Hitler came to power and the first revolutionary trials were beginning, who were then confronted as a completion of their education with the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the world of concentration camps, a Europe of torture and prisons – these men must today rear their sons and create their works in a world threatened by nuclear destruction. Nobody, I think, can ask them to be optimists. And I even think that we should understand – without ceasing to fight it – the error of those who in an excess of despair have asserted their right to dishonour and have rushed into the nihilism of the era.

Like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Sartre also recognised these seductive forces of nihilism. Indeed, existentialist thought is not only aware of these nihilistic tendencies, but seek ways to address this - to 'forge for [oneself] an art of living in times of catastrophe in order… to fight openly against the instinct of death at work in our history' (Camus, 1957). For some, like Nietzsche and Sartre, it comes from a full, committed engagement with life and art. For theistic existentialists, like Kierkegaard, it is a 'leap of faith' into religious forms of life. For other thinkers, such as Camus and De Beauvoir, it is simply a matter of recognising the value in even the most banal aspects of our lives.

According to Taylor (1992), one insidious form of nihilism is instrumental reasoning, propagated in the 'industrio-technological' society that gives us little space for serious contemplation. Referring to Tocqueville (2003), he explores how the choices we make that allow us to lead a quiet, comfortable life can result in our becoming dangerously apathetic to the world around us, except for that which serves us in an instrumental sense.[5] For Taylor (1992), as well as the later Sartre and De Beauvoir, the only way to avoid this is genuine political participation. It is this kind of commitment as opposed to a blind acceptance of the societal order (especially prevalent in those that appear to be less threatening, such as the 'third way' socio-political climate in Ireland), that signals our existential freedom, representing a step towards more authentic forms of living.

Reactions to Scientism
As Camus (2005) argues in the *Myth of Sisyphus*, the only question that philosophy should concern itself with is whether or not we should live. In answering this, he (2005, p. 4) acknowledges how 'it is almost impossible to be logical to the bitter end', since when we are contemplating such questions, it is not an appeal to logic that we make, but 'absurd reasoning'. The Absurd is a feeling that can hit at any moment – 'at any street corner' (Camus, 2005, p. 9) - suddenly slapping us out of our stupor. It is in such moments, faced with the possibility of nihilism, that we thus decide to live, knowing that the legitimacy and value in doing so does not originate from purely 'rational' ways of thinking.

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[5] In *Democracy in America* (written between 1835-1840), Tocqueville calls this a 'soft despotism' – one that we enact upon ourselves in our submission to capitalism, but which also comes in the form of 'mild and paternalistic' forms of government who leave little space (or, indeed, reason) for critical forms of questioning.

Existentialists seek to address the wider discourse of scientism that has pervaded both everyday as well as intellectual life, correlating to a 'disenchanted' world and the nihilistic tendencies it embodies. Scientism is not restricted to 'scientific' fields (and, indeed, we should be cautious about conflating the two). Abstract forms of philosophy are also culpable in this regard, exemplified in the ways that they separate facts and values, or seek to reduce the life of the individual to what can be measured or calculated.[6] Since science bases itself on the knowability of quantifiable objects, hypotheses are worked out via observation and experimentation (much like we see in evidence-based educational research), where 'self-determination is construed as an absurd contradiction in an essentially mechanistic cosmic order' (Kneller, 1958, p. 12).

For the existentialists, such approaches are not conducive to the study of the human situation, since this situation is often ambiguous and paradoxical in nature. Humans cannot be atomistically understood as the sum of our 'parts' - I.Q.s, biological drives and urges. Rather, humans are self-conscious beings - beings that are able to question their own being, to say 'no' to their so-called instincts (Bonnett, 1994), to give an account of an inner life not immediately public, to assign meaning to the world of objects, and to continually (re)define themselves in light of this. This outlook can be seen in Kierkegaard, who spoke of the anxieties that arise from the very fact that we can choose to go against our 'natural' inclinations. It can also be seen in those associated with the phenomenology of Husserl, who, for this reason, pay close attention to the concrete data of lived experience. Nietzsche also saw humans as non-cumulative, hence arguing that for each individual, we must closely examine one's situation, where truth is something that is 'lived' rather than pursued (Kneller, 1958). Sartre and De Beauvoir similarly appreciated the necessity of understanding the human person as a whole, as both transcendent and yet situated within the confines of their situatedness in the world.

Scientism is dangerous not only because of the atomistic ways that it conceptualises the human, but also in its prevalence in economic and political realms where one is reduced to 'functions'[7]. Unlike the 'pre-disenchantment' era that also saw individuals as 'fixed' in terms of their social standings, this 'function-oriented' view of the human is not based on a belief in the greater cosmic order, but the perceived necessity of economic efficiency. But not only this, by applying the 'scientific method' in all areas of lived experience, much of the complexity and richness of that experience is removed. In response to this debased understanding of what it means to be human, those associated with existentialism therefore emphasise the concrete, lived experience of human existence. This, as we have seen, means that existentialist writing is often fragmentary. Sartre's literature, for example, is experimental, with literary techniques such as simultaneity in *The Reprieve* and *Iron in the Soul*. Perhaps these techniques more closely capture what it means to exist in a way that is distinct from non-conscious beings. Whereas a pen's existence is pre-determined by their function (a function assigned by humans), *our* existence is defined through the very process of existing itself.

The Committed Individual
For some existentialist thinkers, there is no inherent 'self' that exists as an unchangeable essence at the core of our being. This is part of the reason why, for them, scientistic modes of thinking are not conducive to the study of human practices. As the dismantling of the Cartesian *cogito* might suggest, it is not a permanent 'self' that distinguishes us from one another. Rather, it is how we have chosen to live. Individuals are simply 'thrown' into the world which, for

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[6] Scientism in philosophy is associated with movements such as logical positivism (Kneller, 1958).

[7] In the *Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus (2005, pp. 15-16) states that '[t]he mind's deepest desire, even in its most elaborate operations, parallels man's unconscious feelings in the face of his universe: it is an insistence upon familiarity, an appetite for clarity – [an] appetite for the absolute illustrat[ing] the essential impulse for the human drama.' This is a tentative explanation for our drive for certainty that leads to scientistic thinking.

Sartre, means that we are therefore 'condemned to be free'. Often, this lack of determinacy in our lives is made immediately clear in moments conventionally termed as 'existential crises', moments that can leave us with a sense of the absurd nature of our own existence. As Camus (2005, p. 11; pp. 17-18) states:

> In certain situations, replying 'nothing' when asked what one is thinking about may be pretence in a man [sic]… But if that reply is sincere, if it symbolises that odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent, in which the chain of daily gestures is broken, in which the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again, then it is as it were the first sign of absurdity….This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction. For if I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and summarise it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers.

For atheistic existentialists in particular[8], it is ultimately us as individuals who assign meaning to the world as we navigate our existence, although not always on the level of explicit awareness. The world itself is absurd, and thus 'deaf' to our calls for meaning. But it is in these so-called 'existential crises' that one may be awakened to this (Camus, 2005). Many existentialists call for an honesty in light of how we see ourselves, something close to Foucault's 'care of the self' as explored further in Chapter 8. Nietzsche, for example, highly values this, not as some 'objective' that is reached and refined through 'scientistic' modes of study, but as something which signals our commitment to life. Kierkegaard also demands honesty from his readers, an honesty that comes from questioning our claims to truth, such as Socrates once did with his interlocutors in Athens. Sartre dismisses the possibility of becoming fully sincere in his discussion on 'bad faith', but nevertheless emphasises the importance of being honest in our commitment to certain values, and through holding ourselves responsible for them. For Sartre, the individual is not 'forced' into having particular commitments but instead, is always in a state of deciding upon and responding to what they have committed themselves to.

To sum, existentialism is a 'multi-vocal expression of feelings and states of mind' (Kneller, 1958, p. xi), denying the universality of values, and instead, affirming the paradoxes that seem to be central to the human condition. Such paradoxes are things we must learn to cope with rather than overcome, not by comforting ourselves in the certainty of scientism, but by a willingness to commit to oneself as an individual fully in the world, to 'penetrate the marrow of life' (Kneller, 1958, p. xi). This involves recognising that oneself and one's situatedness is always in tension, a tension that may be the source of anguish, but is also testament to our existential freedom as individuals. Such a realisation allows us to conquer the forces of depersonalisation evident in our world, particularly during the times in which each of the key thinkers were writing, but also in relation to our time today. The existentialists sought to reinvent philosophy in a way that would revolt against an abstract conceptualisation of the human person by starting from the individual, and by attending more closely to lived, concrete experiences. It is, for some, a form of philosophy that is 'a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity… an insistence upon an impossible transparency… challeng[ing] the world anew every second' (Camus, 2005, p. 52).[9]

Importantly, existentialism is not confined to philosophy. It also appears throughout various art forms both in Sartre's time but also earlier than this, in writers such as Beckett, Joyce, Dostoevsky, Bellow, Kafka, de Beauvoir, and, indeed, Sartre himself. Such writers also attempt to capture the difficulties of being an individual - the disenchantment that follows

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[8] But also, to a certain extent, theistic existentialists like Kierkegaard who argue that God is Absurd, and as such faith is something we must continually renew and commit ourselves to as individuals.

[9] For Camus (2005), this was not strictly speaking 'philosophy', but 'life', where choosing to live becomes the ultimate revolt against the instinct of suicide in our lives, analogous with the seductiveness of nihilism.

seismic changes in societies, the paradoxical ways in which individuals often live, trapped between an adherence to the cultural traditions of which they are apart, and the individual freedom to respond to these. Various movements in art are also associated with existentialism, most overtly in the apparent absurdity of Dadaism. It is difficult to say which influenced which, or whether it was simply the intellectual milieu at the time. The fact that Sartre was also a prolific novelist and playwright indicates that, indeed, this was also achieved through an engaged encounter with other forms of literature, something I will also attempt to emulate throughout. For now, let us now turn to some of Sartre's key ideas before more fully exploring them throughout this section of the thesis.

3.4 Sartre and Existentialism

When writing his autobiography at the age of 59, Sartre was tentative about making any claims that suggested his becoming a writer was determined by his upbringing. This, as we will understand later, would be very much against the entire thrust of his philosophy. In *Words*, he examines the idea that we inevitably become the summation of our actions, and that, in death, something 'essential' about that 'who we are' is created despite the fact that when we live our lives, we are not underpinned by such determinism. I will therefore avoid making any such claims on Sartre's behalf, but instead, will attempt to offer a brief trajectory of his thinking.

Although he by no means invented existentialism, he is nevertheless one of the main thinkers associated with term, alongside his writing companion and partner, Simone de Beauvoir. Both Sartre and de Beauvoir lived through the First World War. During the Second World War, they were key members of the French Resistance movement. In 1933, Sartre spent some time in Berlin studying Husserl's phenomenology, and as a Prisoner of War, he read Heidegger's *Being and Time*. These would later come to significantly shape his own seminal text, *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre and de Beauvoir were also key figures in the French literary scene at the time, so much so that Sartre was offered, but ultimately rejected, the Noble Prize for Literature on two separate occasions. A number of Sartre's novels and plays, such as *Nausea* (1938), *No Exit* (1944), and *The Roads to Freedom* (1945) trilogy, deal with key existentialist themes.

After the war, Sartre became increasingly politicised. Despite at first tentatively rejecting communism, he came to embrace it more fully in his later years, attempting to combine Marxism with his overall existentialist philosophy. This combination was not always successful, since both theories contain deep contradictions that Sartre could never quite resolve. The later Sartre, for example, recognised the significance and power of societal structures on the extent to which freedom can be truly and authentically enacted, an idea he may have once labelled as 'bad faith'. He (1964, p. 150) admitted that this 'most recently acquired knowledge… gnaws at [his] old established facts without entirely dispelling them.' Thus, he never quite dismissed his central idea of freedom but instead, re-focused his conception on the ways that we are always responding to situations in some way, even in those where we appear to be wholly unfree. Arguably, it is this 'milder' understanding of Sartre that I take up throughout this thesis, despite focusing almost exclusively on his earlier works.

Importantly, Sartre cannot be understood without reference to the previously mentioned prolific existentialist and feminist philosopher and activist, Simone de Beauvoir.[10] Both De

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[10] For a more thorough overview of Sartre and De Beauvoir's relationship, consider 'At the Existentialist Café' by Sarah Blakewell (2016), a popular book that contextualises and explores the existentialist movement in France in an accessible, light-hearted but also thoroughly researched way. 'Hearts and Minds: The Common Journey of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre' by Axel Madsen (1979) is also a biographical piece of work that explores their relationship through an existentialist lens. It is generally agreed that De Beauvoir's novels 'She Came to Stay' (1943) and 'The Mandarins' (1954) are fictionalised accounts of their relationship in the midst of wartime Paris.

Beauvoir and Sartre were lifelong partners since their early days in the Sorbonne in Paris. They wrote concurrently (quite literally), and thus, it is difficult to draw a strict boundary between their ideas. De Beauvoir also wrote novels, essays, and philosophical texts on existential themes, similar to those that can be found in Sartre's work. Both she and Sartre were extremely influential in shaping post-War minds in France and, indeed, internationally. They founded the existentialist-themed journal *Les Temps Modernes*, first issued in 1945 and only ceasing publication in 2019. *Les Temps Modernes* was staunchly against political neutrality and contained a number of key essays from important thinkers such as philosophers Aron and Merleau-Ponty (both of whom were early members of the editorial board), novelists and playwrights Beckett and Genet, as well as Sartre and De Beauvoir themselves. De Beauvoir is probably most famous for her application of existentialist thought to feminist ethics, and her book 'The Second Sex' is a central text of second wave feminism. I must admit that I strongly regret not spending more time on De Beauvoir – perhaps, indeed, I will save this for another thesis! The reasons for my focus on Sartre are purely pragmatic and, in many ways, accidental.

Existentialism and Phenomenology

Many of Sartre's earlier essays, including the *Transcendence of the Ego*, the *Imaginary*, and *A Sketch for the Emotions*, demonstrate his then-emerging ideas around the nature of consciousness. In these three essays, Sartre employs what he calls 'phenomenological psychology'.[11] For Sartre, phenomenology represents an attempt to reconceptualise the 'scientific' understanding of perception and experience by taking a descriptive rather than an explanatory approach. The phenomenology that Sartre employs comes from his study of Husserl in Berlin between the years 1933 and 1934.

What appealed to him most in Husserl's thought was the idea of intentionality. Simplistically put, intentionality relates to the fundamental nature of consciousness i.e. that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. On the surface, this seems like a simple idea, but its implications are far-reaching. Before this, Cartesian thinking was dominant in philosophy, and with that the so-called mind/body dualism that in part led to the sharpened distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective'. The concept of intentionality, however, calls this into question. In the *Imaginary*, for instance, Sartre (2010) describes how a 'doorknob' does not appear to me in its 'brute' mode of existence, the 'meaning' of which I come to establish via systematic forms of reflection. Rather, it appears to me *immediately as it is* because of the intersubjective and conventional ways in which it is used. Such conventions are contingent, for Sartre – they very much depend on the communities of practice in which I am situated and are not wholly reducible to my perception. Despite this, however, their 'objectivity' is always suffused with (inter)subjectivity. For Sartre, consciousness is 'creative' in this sense. Through encountering so-called 'brute existence', either 'physically' or in memory, conscious individuals are therefore complicit in its meaningfulness.

Part of Sartre's initial attraction to phenomenology also relates to its focus on more strictly describing what it is we experience in the world by starting from the concrete, lived experiences of individuals. But whilst Sartre used the phenomenological method throughout his career in various ways, there was one aspect that he felt threatened the key idea of intentionality in Husserl's account – i.e. that of the 'transcendental ego'. He therefore set out to reject this in his earlier work, a rejection that formed the basis of his entire philosophical position.

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[11] In *Being and Nothingness*, he refers to 'phenomenological ontology', where he expands his phenomenological account to give a more fundamental description of Being.

The 'Pre-Reflective' Cogito

In his 1934 essay *Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre reconceptualises two related understandings of the self along these lines. Firstly, he considers the sense of self that arises from the Husserlian idea of the transcendental ego. Secondly, he turns to the 'psychological' manifestation of this – i.e. the material ego. In conceptualising an 'ego' at our core, Sartre thought that Husserl undermined what is most fruitful in his phenomenological approach, i.e. that consciousness is pure, outward-facing intentionality. In response to this, he puts forth the idea that there is, in fact, a distinction between two forms of consciousness - 'reflected' and 'pre-reflective'. This latter sense of consciousness is pre-personal, and is most fundamental. It is that which exists at our core, and not some essentialist self. Ultimately, when we talk about the self, or when we suggest in some way the existence of a 'me', then what we are strictly speaking about is the produced or reflected ego.

When we think about activities that we are completely absorbed in, Sartre would say that we more closely experience this fundamental sense of consciousness, where once we reflect upon what we are doing, or when we realise that we are 'seen' by others, our (material) self is thereby produced in the world. What this (perhaps bizarrely) suggests is that, ultimately, there *is* no real, essentialist 'self' at our core, but only a self that exists in the world. And whereas pre-reflective consciousness is fundamentally ungraspable, it nevertheless underpins this very production of the 'reflected self' in the first place. This, of course, paves the way for many of Sartre's later ideas expounded not only in his philosophical texts (most notably, *Being and Nothingness)*, but also his literary works, and will be more fully explored in Chapter 4.

Facticity and Transcendence

Since there is no 'essential self' for Sartre, we are therefore ultimately free and ultimately responsible to become who we are, including how it is that we think of ourselves both in the future and in retrospect. Sartre did not believe in the authority of god(s), and thus the value of our choices is solely created by human society. But all of this does not mean to say that we live our lives aimlessly. Rather, human beings decide on what Sartre calls a 'fundamental project', a project not determined prior to our undertaking it, but as that which is made manifest in the ways that we act. It is through this project that our choices and our understandings of the world are grounded. This project itself is contingent – indeed, we can choose to adhere to it or to abandon it, even if this is not normally what we do. For this reason, we are also ultimately responsible for how we live and understand our lives. Having said that, Sartre does not deny the 'situatedness' of our existence, or what he calls 'facticity'. Indeed, freedom for Sartre does not mean that I am able to do whatever I want, but rather, I am free to conceptualise the life that I want to live *in spite* of these uncontrollable aspects of our situation.

Sartre's later writings takes on a slightly different tone in relation to freedom, however. As we have seen, he recognised that there are social forces at work that seem to determine us in specific ways. He (2008a) does not deny that we internalise aspects of our social conditioning, and that we may then 're-externalise' these through our actions. He also does not deny the space we occupy as bodies, and how this inevitably restricts certain choices we can make, or the ways that we might understand ourselves. And yet, we always respond to such concrete situations – in fact, we cannot choose *but* to respond in some way. Importantly, Sartre is not talking about 'autonomy' here – i.e. the freedom that we cultivate through active participation in society, or through education. As we will explore in Chapter 5, freedom for Sartre is fundamental, underpinning our existence because of the very fact that we are conscious beings. Sartre recognises, however, that this is often not how we think about ourselves and the world. In order to alleviate (or deny) the tension between our situation and our freedom, we often resort to what he calls 'bad faith'.

Bad Faith

As indicated, Sartre's conception of freedom implies an enormous weight of responsibility and, as such, it leaves us perpetually anxious and uncertain. But this is not how we navigate our existence on a daily basis. When I am buying a coffee, I do not often reflect on the implications my choices have for the perpetuation of capitalism. Despite the fact that I abhor capitalism, I can certainly recognise my complicity in its reproduction through my role as a consumer. I am aware that if I stopped buying coffee, I may contribute in some small part to living in accordance with my own fundamental values. And yet, *I buy the coffee anyway*. Some may argue that I am determined into buying the coffee - my job makes me tired, and I therefore *need* it. Or, because of the very nature of the world in which I live, I do not have the time or space to really consider the impact my choice has on wider society. Some might argue that this is not really *my* responsibility – capitalism is not going to be dismantled because one person decided not to buy coffee. It is certainly easier to rationalise in this way than to acknowledge the weight of responsibility that I might have. Many of us do not necessarily have these thoughts when buying coffee at all since, if we did, the gesture itself would be impossible to continue.

If his reputation is to be believed, Sartre was no stranger to coffee. But he does introduce a concept that might explain why it is that we live in this way – i.e. the concept of 'bad faith'. Simply put, bad faith is the denial of oneself as transcending our situation, where instead we define ourselves as 'fixed' or 'determined' within it. Sartre provides not uncontroversial examples of bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*, examples that may nevertheless be interpreted not as accusations but as descriptions of how most of us live. The issue of 'bad faith' relates to our failure to accept responsibility for the fact that we *could* act in a different way.[12] But in order to see ourselves outside of our situation, we need to first accept that we can become more than what this situation dictates. Most of us fail to do so, not because we are choosing to be in bad faith in an active sense, but because we simply do not think to question how we might be perpetuating it. Indeed, it is often only when something is 'amiss' that such an opportunity arises. But even then, it is often easier to believe that we are completely determined by our situation rather than admitting that our inaction is also a choice. Remedying bad faith requires both an awareness as well as an acceptance of this freedom and responsibility, but also the accompanying anxiety that doing so entails. It is not just about sincerity, since sincerity itself *may also* be a way to avoid taking responsibility for ourselves. For instance, I might sincerely decide not to buy coffee any longer because of my awareness of the damage I am causing as a result. But if my purpose in doing so is to simply feel better about myself or so that I can gloat to others, or if I convince myself that by cultivating a 'sincere disposition', I will always be in a position of 'good faith', then I have not, in fact, avoided being in bad faith. Bad faith thus appears to be something unavoidable in our lives. There are, however, more or less innocuous examples of this. It is worth noting that whilst this term represents individuals, it may also be used in relation to institutions, all of which is explored in Chapter 6.

The Other

Much of Sartre's earlier writing seems to focus heavily on the individual and their relationship with the world, one that perhaps I am also guilty of in my focus on *the teacher*. But he also discusses the relationship between one individual and another. For Sartre, much of what defines

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[12] The later Sartre introduces the concept of 'counter-finalities', where we may try to live in accordance with our fundamental values and yet unforeseeable consequences that go against these values arise as a result of our (in)action. For instance, perhaps I stop buying coffee in order to disrupt the perpetuation of capitalism. But perhaps this adversely affects those most disadvantaged by capitalism, therefore increasing the inequality that was the very reason why I abhor capitalism in the first place. Counter-finalities are distinct from bad faith in that they are made in 'good conscience', and yet they represent a quasi-tragic tension of intention and consequences, thus presenting a more complex picture of individual freedom and responsibility.

this relationship is an inescapable sense of uneasiness, since it restricts the capacity of the individual to live in accordance with their own 'nature' as free conscious beings. In accounting for how it is that we engage with each other, Sartre is interested in describing this phenomenon in a concrete sense. He is not particularly interested in questions around whether others *do* exist since, for him, such questions always presuppose an immediate consciousness of the Other. He also does not necessarily discuss how it is that we *should* encounter other people, although this is something he considers in his later works.

Sartre's most overt discussion of our existence with others is in *Being and Nothingness*, but it also features heavily in his literary work (particularly *No Exit*). A key idea in relation to this is the 'look' of the Other, something he explores through the concept of 'shame'. When I am performing an embarrassing act, I can continue to do so unhampered until I realise or suspect that another is watching me. This realisation is then accompanied by an immediate feeling of exposure, and ultimately, a heightened sense of awareness of myself as a body present in that moment. Whereas I was previously 'at one' with my actions without my 'self' being present at the scene, in being seen by the Other, this sense of (my)self 'erupts'. I become defined in ways over which I have no control – defined, indeed, by the shameful act I am engaged in. This 'production' of oneself through being seen comes about through reflection, through gauging or measuring the situation, through judging myself as 'one who should feel ashamed', thus resulting in an objectification of 'who I am'. Importantly, this can *only* happen through our existence in relation to other people.

As Sartre rightly identifies, the Other need not be physically present for this objectification to arise. As such, I am always 'existentially exposed' to the Other, an exposure that in turn impacts upon my own self-understanding. Whereas Sartre argues that we can always respond to our situation, the Other places a special limitation on my freedom, since they are *also* a conscious, free being. We may struggle against the ways in which we are recognised by the Other, but this struggle may not necessarily amount to us being redefined by the Other on our own terms. We may avow the old trope that one must not care about what others think, but indifference can only be momentarily sustained. And since we will always exist in the world with others, this struggle for subjectivity is inescapable (Heter, 2006). We must therefore accept this as an unavoidable aspect of our own existence. More of this will be discussed in Chapter 7.

3.5 An Educational Focus

Arguably, the classroom serves as a microcosm where many of Sartre's ideas make sense. Such examples in the classroom include being so absorbed in the task at hand that we experience a more fundamental form of consciousness where we are not present as 'persons'. But equally, certain moments interrupt this fragile state of being – a student (rightly or wrongly) disrupts the class, or one becomes attentive to the presence of the inspector at the back of the room, suddenly aware of their own bodily presence through the gaze of others. Perhaps there are moments when one resorts to 'bad faith' in order to temper the feeling of exposure and anxiety, where one sees oneself only in terms of their pre-defined roles as 'teachers' rather than 'persons'. There are also moments where one responds to situations in other ways, ways that make manifest our inherent responsibility and freedom to act. In this sense, many of Sartre's ideas serve as a 'touchstone' of sorts, one that allows us to (re)conceptualise teaching in new ways.

Part III of this thesis considers how to account for teaching in light of this (re)conceptualisation. Since so much of teacher accountability is embedded within the paradigm of 'effectiveness', the current focus is often on how to measure or 'prove' our accounts of teaching in neat and simplified forms, often with a debased understanding of 'evidence' and 'accuracy'. Against this current grain of teacher accountability, we can

therefore begin to explore how Sartre's ideas might allow us to rethink our accounts of teaching, moving from a technicist to a form of existentialist sensitivity to concrete experiences in the classroom. Thus, I propose a navigation away from the neatness of policy to the messiness of existential thought, starting from the origins of Sartre's entire philosophy – his understanding of the 'self'.

4

Sartre on the Self

4.1 Phenomenology of the Self

In 1937, Sartre published the *Transcendence of the Ego*. Throughout this work, Sartre considers three kinds of selfhood - namely, the pre-reflective or pre-personal cogito, the produced ego, and the self as 'value', an ideal future projection never fully attained (Barnes, 1993). This early essay argues for a new understanding of selfhood that would later become central to his entire existentialist theory. Importantly, however, Sartre does not often use the term 'self', assumedly because of the essentialist connotations he wishes to deny. Because of this, his discussion is replete with difficult and elusive terminology. Sartre is also attempting to get his reader away from binary thinking, and as such, he resists the dichotomies that discussions on selfhood often involve (e.g. active and passive, object and subject). Ironically, however, there are many who argue that much of his own discussion retains traces of dualisms.[1] In any case, this chapter is focused not only on exploring the implications of Sartre's thoughts on the self for other areas of study (e.g. education), but also in clarifying some of his enormously rich but demanding ideas.

Before we begin, it is worth clarifying some of the terminology he employs. Firstly, the term 'ego' generally refers a 'bundle of character traits and a structured personality' (Barnes, 2003, p. 43) one that is formulated on the basis of how individuals understand themselves. There are two main variations of this – the transcendental ego (adopted from the philosophy of Husserl) and the material ego (stemming from psychological conceptions of selfhood). This ego is often 'assigned' to individuals (by themselves or by others) on the basis of their actions in the world, and in that sense, it is positional. In positioning oneself in the world, one is often led to believe in a permanent self, where 'who we are' remains unchanged throughout our existence. For Sartre, however, the self only exists in the moment that it is 'reflected' upon. For this reason, the ego is sometimes used in conjunction with the term 'produced' or 'reflected'.

Sartre's discussion of the produced self might appear to be akin to the later poststructuralist understanding popular in educational research (e.g. Bonnett, 2009). Simplistically speaking, the poststructuralist movement encourages us to see the self as that which is continually (re)constructed by external forces or 'discourses'. Sartre's ideas in relation to the produced self parallel this in some regard. For instance, this produced self – understood as an enduring sense of 'who I am' - is, indeed, constructed on the basis of how I exist in the

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[1] There are debates, particularly in reference to *Being and Nothingness*, around whether or not Sartre was continuing the rationalist discourse he initially set out to dissolve, where his understanding of Being is reduced to categories produced by consciousness. On the other hand, some argue that he remains loyal to the phenomenological tradition in recognising that the conceptual ordering of Being is limited by the perspectival nature of consciousness (See, for example, Whitford, 1979).

world (with others). For Sartre, however, although this ego is intimately rooted to the situation in which one finds oneself, it is nevertheless underpinned by a more fundamental pre-reflective form of consciousness, one that Sartre will later argue is central to our ultimate freedom and responsibility in fashioning ourselves, thus in direct opposition to the distinct lack of agency that implied in poststructuralist thought.

What Sartre calls the 'pre-reflective *cogito*' should also not to be confused with Descartes' usage of the term[2], the latter of which entails a 'pre-existing self that lies at the centre of the world' (Bonnett, 2009, p. 359). As we will later see, this Cartesian understanding of selfhood has led to a number of 'embarrassing dualisms' in philosophy and elsewhere (Eilis, 2000, p. 23; Sartre, 2018) - sharp distinctions between private and public, outer and inner, objectivity and subjectivity. Sartre's approach is phenomenological in nature, one that in part aims to dissolve these dualisms by arguing that consciousness is, above all, *intentional*. Simply put, consciousness is always conscious *of* something. This 'something' (the 'intentional object') is an intimate part of consciousness, but it is not consciousness itself. Rather, consciousness is *pure* intentionality – i.e. without an internal object, and thus fundamentally without substance. Because of this, conscious beings[3] are underpinned by a distinct *lack* of content, an 'insubstantiality' that leads Sartre to reject the idea that there is a permanent 'essence' (or self) at our core. At the same time, consciousness is always directed outwards in the world and in time - towards a future, and as situated within a particular context of the past.

A key figure in phenomenology is Husserl, most famous, perhaps, for his 'phenomenological reduction' that aims to momentarily suspend metaphysical reflections on the world in order to focus solely on how things appear to consciousness. Like Husserl, Sartre argues the confusions often seen in philosophy and in other fields (e.g. psychology) stem from a 'failure to base fundamental concepts and particular methods of empirical investigation' upon this (Kirkpatrick and Williams, 1991, p. 16). In other words, the dualisms posited by Descartes and later thinkers (and, indeed, more conventionally) come about by failing to first attend to our direct (conscious) experience of the world, where the distinctions between 'mind' and 'matter' in the context of consciousness as intentionality cannot be sustained. As such, phenomenologists argue that we should only focus on how things appear to us, in which conclusions that lead to a dualistic understanding of humans and of the world are called into question (Blakewell, 2016). However, even though Sartre's approach is in line with Husserl, there are fundamental disagreements between the two thinkers, and it is on this basis that the *Transcendence* was written.

Throughout this chapter, I will examine the conceptions of the self that Sartre explores in the *Transcendence*, as well as his own exploration of what this 'self' is, and how it comes to be produced. I will include some examples from the educational context throughout, but not merely for explanatory purposes. In considering the ways in which Sartre disrupts some of the more conventional and implicit understandings we have of concepts such as the 'self', we can also begin to think about how this line of thinking might disrupt certain aspects of educational discourses exemplified in Part I, particularly in their accounts of the experience of teaching.

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[2] From *'cogito ergo sum'* ('I think, therefore I am'), where 'cogito' can roughly be translated as 'I think'. For Descartes, this 'thinking thing' is what makes all of my experience of the world possible, and is deduced through systematic doubting in his *Meditations.* Unlike Sartre's understanding of *cogito*, Descartes' *cogito* is substantial in nature.

[3] Sartre is most likely referring to human beings when he speaks of conscious beings. Arguably, this analysis could also apply to other conscious beings, such as animals. This would require much discussion beyond the scope of this thesis and, as such, I use 'human beings' and 'conscious beings' interchangeably throughout.

4.2 Transcendental and Material Conceptions

The overall aim of the *Transcendence* is to show that the self is not *in* consciousness, but rather, 'is outside, in the world… like the Ego of another' (Sartre, 2011, p. 1). In this sense, the self should not be understood atomistically, but rather, as rooted to the particular situation in which one finds oneself (e.g. Bonnett, 2010). The *Transcendence* is divided into three main parts. The first section explores Husserl's claims in relation to the transcendental ego, which Sartre argues is based on a misconception of the fundamental nature of consciousness. For similar reasons, Sartre also reconceptualises the psychological conception of the self – i.e. the 'material ego'. The second section is dedicated to a discussion on the so-called 'produced self'. In the third section, Sartre concludes by demonstrating the implications of the distinction between pre-reflective consciousness and the produced self for themes that would later become central to *Being and Nothingness.*

Sartre does not deny that we have some sense of self, one that 'positions' us in the world in particular ways. Nevertheless, this sense of self is underpinned by a consciousness *prior* to this positioning. For him, this understanding of consciousness as *pre*-reflective is endangered by Husserl's transcendental ego, thus destroying what was most fruitful in Husserl's phenomenology in the first place – i.e. consciousness as intentionality. Whilst Husserl himself subscribes to the idea that consciousness is intentional, Sartre takes this one step further by claiming that such intentionality is *all that consciousness is*.

The Transcendental Ego

Like Husserl, Sartre argues that in order for there to be consciousness, there must be consciousness *of* consciousness – i.e. self-consciousness. Husserl takes this to imply the existence of an 'ego' or a self that is the origin and unifier of conscious thought, 'a real consciousness, accessible to each and every one of us' (Sartre, 2011, p. 3). This in turn implies that consciousness can be divided between an 'I' as separate from the activity of thinking. But for Sartre, as a result of this:

> …[c]onsciousness has become heavier, and lost the character that made it into the absolute existent *by virtue of the fact that it did not exist*. It is now heavy and *ponderable*. All the results of phenomenology are in danger of crumbling away if the *I* is not, every bit as much as the world, a relative existent, i.e. an object *for* consciousness (Sartre, 2011, p. 5).

For Sartre, consciousness is nothing except for the 'being conscious of' the object towards which it is directed. It is not that object itself. For example, I may be conscious of a glass of water on the table before me. But it would be bizarre to claim that that glass of water is 'in' my consciousness. Equally, I may be conscious of the fact that I am angry about something. But it is not that that anger is 'me' – rather, it directed towards the thing that is affecting my emotional state.[4] The so-called inner life of conscious beings is not the sense of self that is implied through Husserl's transcendental ego, which Sartre claims cuts through consciousness like an 'opaque blade'. Rather, it is fundamentally prior to this in that it is *pre-reflective*. But what, exactly, does pre-reflective consciousness look like in a concrete sense?

Say I am remembering a book I was reading on the train yesterday. I can remember both the act of reading as well as the person – me – involved in this act. In this moment, I am reflecting on the fact that I am also involved in this act of remembering, and that the person

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[4] In *The Imaginary*, Sartre (2010) rejects the so-called 'gallery model' of the mind, which portrays mental images as immanent – i.e. as *in* consciousness. Since for Sartre, what we call a 'mental image' is the *imaginative consciousness of* that object. It is not consciousness itself, since consciousness is without content. This is also true of memories – i.e. the 'thing' that my consciousness is directed towards does not have to be immediately present before me in a concrete sense.

remembering now is the same person who was reading on the train. For Husserl, the transcendental ego (or 'self') is a factual necessity for the apprehension of a thought or a memory over time. Without it, how can we understand the continuity of consciousness – that I was the same person yesterday as I am today? Surely there must be something that unifies both the reflecting (present) and the reflected on (past) consciousnesses?

Sartre accepts that there is a synthesis of both consciousnesses in the present moment. Fundamentally, however, the consciousness that is remembered is *not* the consciousness that originally moved me to act. When I was absorbed in reading, for instance, I was purely at 'one' with the activity itself, and at that point, I was on the level of pre-reflective awareness. It is not that I was *un*conscious in such moments, since if that were the case, I would not be able to understand what I was reading. But if I reflected on what I was doing – the external details of the activity (like the dots and lines on the page that make up the words), or myself as a body present at the scene - a radical modification in consciousness occurs. At this moment, there is a movement from the pre-reflective to the reflected plane. I become 'detached' from the activity – no longer 'plunged into the world of objects' (Sartre, 2010, p. 8) - and begin to conceptualise myself as a distinct entity in the world. Perhaps I am unable to continue reading, being no longer absorbed in the narrative.[5] Those moments of pure absorption most closely represent the fundamental nature of consciousness as 'pre-reflective' – and, indeed, the fundamental insubstantiality that exists at our core.

When a teacher first walks into a room full of students - especially for the first time - they are often accompanied by an uncanny sense of anxiety and exposure, stemming from a heightened sense of self-awareness. This relates to what Sartre (2003, p. 260) later calls the 'irruption of the self'.[6] Teachers may feel as though their 'self' has been put on display, a self now open to the forces of evaluation from others. In such moments, they may resort to a kind of 'performativity' in order to ease this sense of anxiety (Ball 2003; 2012, Brady, 2019a; 2020b). Such anxiety is not just about whether or not one will be recognised as 'effective', but is also circumscribed by potential shame or mockery, by being seen as an 'imposter' of sorts, or, indeed, purely by the fact that one is a body present in the classroom in front of others, 'seen' in a way that is beyond one's control. Conventionally speaking, we think of this 'self' as pre-existing the moment the teacher arrives in the classroom, and as enduring in that sense. But it nevertheless only 'erupts' when she enters the room. In that sense, it exists only *upon reflection.*

Let's say that this heightened self-awareness recedes as the lesson progresses, as the teacher and the students become more absorbed in the educational moment. Arguably, both are engaged with one another on a fundamentally pre-reflective level. It can take just one destabilising moment in the classroom for one's 'self' to erupt – a student comments on what the teacher is wearing; another teacher enters the classroom to help address the racket they hear in the hallway. The classroom is thus always underpinned by a fragile, constant oscillation between the *pre-reflective* and the *reflected state*, thus highlighting the distinction that Sartre discusses in his essay (Brady, 2020a).[7] This oscillation is not something to be overcome, since the production of the self is very much central to how we navigate our day to day lives. And

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[5] This is assuming that reading involves some level of comprehension in order for it to be considered 'reading', opening up further discussion around the differences between performing an activity such that one 'loses' oneself, versus a more *performative* sense, where one becomes so self-conscious that they fail to do so. This distinction is exemplified in the example of the 'performative pupil' in Chapter 6.

[6] In newer translations, it is referred to as a 'sudden entrance of the self' (Sartre, 2018, p. 357). I have decided to use the original translation by H. E. Barnes (Sartre, 2003).

[7] Of course, these disruptions are often necessary. Whilst such questions are important, my interest here is more so on accounting for the ways in which we might experience this 'absorption' without resorting to claims about what *ought* to be the case.

whilst this produced self is not arbitrary, it is something that we negotiate (with), as explored in the next chapter. But thinking of ourselves *only* in terms of this sense of self represents what Sartre will later call 'bad faith' - a denial of the fundamental 'pre-reflectivity' of conscious human beings. Interestingly, many argue that a good practitioner should always reflect on what they are doing, not simply *on* action, but *in* action (e.g. Sarivan, 2011; Schön, 1983; Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). But much like the case of reading, *un*reflective absorption[8] is also necessary if the educational activity is to ensue (Brady, 2020a)

When we talk about inspection systems like self-evaluation, what sort of 'self' is being evaluated? Do the ways in which we train teachers to be effective (as well as the ways in which we measure the extent to which this is the case) imply a separation between teachers as 'selves' and teaching as 'activity', a detachment of sorts between the teacher and the educational moment? This, of course, has a range of implications for the very idea of reflective practice, including the extent to which it ever really captures what is going on. It is particularly pertinent when such reflections are used to offer an account of oneself, as explored in Chapter 9. In order to understand this more fully, let us turn to Sartre's second account of the ego – the so-called material ego evident in psychological conceptions of the self.

The Material Ego

Sartre argues that the most tangible distinction between the pre-reflective and the reflected ego can be found in the psychological or 'materialist' conceptions of the self, particularly in thinkers such as La Rochefoucauld.[9] La Rochefoucauld (1924) posits that the drive of *amour propre*[10] sits behind all our actions and yet conceals itself in various ways. Much like the 'unconscious' that Sartre also rejects, these drives demonstrate the necessity of a self that acts as a magnet for how we see the world. For Sartre, this conception arises from a confusion over the essentially distinctive structure of reflective and unreflected acts. It also implies that conscious action has a degree of determinism that he later denies (Detmer, 2005).

Let's imagine my good friend Pierre needs help. When I see him in this state, my immediate and sole focus is on him. His visible suffering becomes 'an objective world of things and actions that have been performed or are going to be performed' (Sartre, 2010, p. 10). *Amour-propre* moralists see this desire (to help) as something unconscious - I act in order to satiate my unconscious desire to end this uncomfortable, distressing situation. The situation. along with unconscious drives or dispositions of mine, *determine* how I will act. But for Sartre, these unconscious motives are interpretations of why I act *after the fact*, arising therefore as a result of my reflection on the situation. They do not necessarily account for what moved me to act in a more immediate sense – i.e. the pre-reflective consciousness as intentionally directed towards Pierre-in-need.

When one is absorbed in the act of teaching, so much so that they are not aware of the lesson objectives in a reflective' sense, then what precisely is it that moves one to act? There are examples of teaching when one enters a kind of 'autopilot' mode, engaging fully in the educational activity with students, often without explicit reference to targets or goals or standards of effectiveness (except, perhaps, after the activity is reflected upon). It seems unlikely that what moves a teacher to act is explicit standards for good practice, since these are not necessarily at the forefront of one's consciousness in such moments. Of course, an

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[8] In Brady (2020a), I discuss 'post-personal' moments of teaching, where the teacher at first experiences a heightened sense of awareness before this recedes as the lesson progresses and as the 'selves' in the classroom are suspended. Fundamentally, however, 'pre-'and 'post-' reflective states are not ontologically distinct.

[9] Francois de la Rochefoucauld (1613-1680) was a famous French nobleman and writer of maxims and memoirs, often celebrated for his clear-cut and unsentimental view of humankind.

[10] Taken up later by Rousseau (1991), *amour propre* characterises a love of oneself founded upon the approval or recognition from others, in contrast with the purer 'self-love' (*amour de soi*).

engagement with these standards can shape what we think about teaching. But it would be naïve to assume that they condition teachers in such a way that they completely remove any exercise of so-called 'subjective' judgement. Perhaps certain judgements are performed on the basis of an unconscious desire to control situations in the classroom, to suppress the uncomfortable feeling of being exposed, for example. This is better explained in relation to the drive of *amour-propre* that La Rochefoucauld explores. But are these explanations always correct? And if so, can they serve as predictions of how a teacher might behave in every situation? For Sartre, *a posteriori* rationalisations first require a more fundamental 'pre-reflective' form of consciousness in order for something like teaching to ensue in the first place.

Thus, the unreflected state is radically distinct from the self that appears at the advent of reflective consciousness. It is only upon reflection that the ego exists, and that it then comes to (albeit not solely) define me as a 'person' in the world. For this reason, the pre-reflective state might also be called the 'pre-personal'. Through reflection, our absorption in an activity is 'poisoned' by the rationalisations we offer. In action, reflecting on *why* I am doing X (the learning objectives, my desire to help, my fundamental motivations for entering teaching in the first place) is akin listening to oneself talk - so distracting that the action itself impossible to carry out. Reflection on action means offering rationalisations as to why I act in a certain way in the classroom – why I use(d) this particular teaching methodology, why I shout(ed) at that student – where what I am reflecting on is the self that is produced, and not the necessarily the original, pre-reflective moment that moved me to act. But what *is* it that is produced here, exactly? How, indeed, is this produced self constituted?

4.3 The Produced Self

Although there is no persistent self *within* us, we nevertheless experience a sense of self, without which we could not speak about 'who we are'. Without this sense of self, how are we to navigate our responsibility in the world, particularly given that it is not only recognisable in us but also in others we encounter? Indeed, this sense of self is implied in the ways that we speak about ourselves and others, in phrases such as 'I am who I am' or 'He is Irish', or even, 'I took the tube yesterday'. In the final sections of the *Transcendence*, Sartre sets out to examine how this sense of self comes about. Because this goes against our ingrained ways of speaking about selfhood, it proves to be the most challenging section to read. Importantly, whilst this sense of self is not arbitrary, it need not be a 'totalising essence' that determines who I am and who I will always be (Bonnett, 2009). Rather, it is continually re-constituted through actions we perform in the world (with others). This is because our sense of self is underpinned by pre-reflective awareness, or what Sartre would later characterise as a fundamental nothingness – and thus freedom - at the core of human beings.

Briefly speaking, Sartre refers to two 'poles' through which this sense of self is produced – namely, states and actions. Let us imagine that the pre-reflective state is a stream of consciousness, within which there are discrete moments – immediate reactions that appear spontaneously and without reflection (e.g. nausea, shame, boredom, revulsion). Of course, such experiences are shaped by our values and norms, related as we will later see to our 'fundamental project'. Through our interpretation of these experiences, we produce a state that seems to be persistent in nature, and a 'self' that acts as a unifier of these discrete moments. But the discrete moments and the process of interpretation are ontologically distinct – one is on the reflective plane, whilst the other is fundamentally pre-reflective. This explains why our interpretation of situations never fully suffice, since the consciousness that precedes our reflection is fundamentally ungraspable.

States versus Pre-Reflective Reactions

Let's return to our friend Pierre, who it seems I now hate:

> I see Pierre, I feel a kind of profound upheaval of revulsion and anger on seeing him (I am already on the reflective level) … I cannot be in error when I say: I feel at this moment a violent revulsion towards Pierre. But is this experience of revulsion hatred? Obviously not… After all, I have hated Pierre a long time and I think I will always hate him. So an instantaneous consciousness of revulsion cannot be my hatred. Even if I limit it to what it is, to an instantaneous moment, I will not be able to continue talking of hatred. I would say: 'I feel a revulsion for Pierre *at this moment*', and in this way I will not implicate the future. But precisely because of this refusal to implicate the future, I would cease to hate (Sartre, 2010, p. 13).

The revulsion I feel towards Pierre is immediate - it appears without reflection from the moment I encounter him. The state of hatred, however, only comes about through my unification each of those discrete moments of revulsion. Although both hatred and revulsion appear at the same time, the revulsion is *prior* to the 'state of hatred'. In fact, it is only on the basis of this revulsion that the 'state of hatred' is offered as an explanation for how I feel. Unlike immediate reactions that are by nature discrete and ephemeral, we tend to see states as 'permanent' – i.e. as continuing beyond the present reactions that arise. For instance, I might believe I have always hated Pierre, and that I will continue to hate him after he has left. But I only feel revolted by him when he is present to my consciousness in some form.

Although Pierre is repugnant to me at this moment, I cannot be certain that I will hate him forever, that my feelings toward him in the future will not change. Of course, this doesn't mean that my hatred towards him is hypothetical or illusionary. The uncertainty of our reflections simply reveal that reflection itself has two forms – pure and impure.[11] Whereas impure reflection implies something infinite and unchangeable about how I feel, pure reflection maintains this hatred within a given moment, without assuming that it will be that way in the future. Even though both forms of reflection are apprehending the same 'data' (i.e. the situation where Pierre arrives), only in impure reflection do we affirm more than what we 'know'. For Sartre, it is on the basis of impure reflection that an essentialist and wholly predictable or deterministic sense of self arises.

Say I have a student who irks me in some way – they never do their work, they are disruptive, or perhaps they are annoyingly keen on being a 'good' student (it would be dubious to claim that one is always irritated for the 'right' reasons). What Sartre might say is that my annoyance is not the result of some permanent state. Rather, it only arises in certain instances when that student confronts me, when I recall them in memory, when I rant about them to my friends and colleagues. My annoyance arises immediately and without reflection, only being 'named' as irritation upon my interpretation of the situation. I may conclude from this that this student is an 'annoying person', or that I am an overly 'irritable teacher'. The 'self' that I identify (and perhaps try to improve) by virtue of this reflection is the material self - the self that is separate from the irritation that causes me to define myself or others in those terms. Fundamentally, however, those immediate reactions do not *determine* who me or the student is or will be. Rather, they *produce* the individual selves involved in those moments.

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[11] Sartre (1975; 2001b) admits that he cannot offer an example of what would constitute 'pure' over 'impure' reflection. In his later works, he implies that it is nearly impossible to distinguish sincere actions from gestures, but that perhaps the best we can do is to have 'critical self-awareness' of ourselves in the past. There are undeniable ethical implications for this that Sartre does not admit to, however.

Not only can these interpretations not account for the state that I *may* be in the future, they also cannot completely verify the state I am currently in. Indeed, the language I use to describe how I feel (and by extension, 'who I am') fails to fully capture the feelings that arise. Such reactions also do not signify something permanent within me – perhaps my attitude towards the student will change as time goes on, or I will become more relaxed in my demeanour. Of course, this does not suggest that my feelings are 'blind', without any basis or grounding as such. It does, however, call into question a number of assumptions concerning 'truth' (as accuracy) claims that are made in the evaluation of the performance of teaching, including the possibility of pure or 'objective' reflections about oneself and others, as well as the seeming predictability that is part of the causal assumptions harboured by improvement discourses in education.

Actions and Qualities
For Sartre, the self is produced through our interpretations of actions in the world – in fact, it can *only* be understood as a 'sum' of our actions in the past. Action here includes both the more 'visible' kinds - driving a car, playing the piano - as well as 'mental' ones, such as reasoning, doubting, meditating, theorising, and indeed, learning. Sartre emphasises that a strict boundary between these two kinds of action should not be drawn, since both 'physical' and 'mental' actions lead to the production of our sense of self. There is, however, a distinction to be made between spontaneous and more mediated actions, however. For example, doubt can be understood in both a spontaneous and (Cartesian) sense. Perhaps I thought that I saw an object in the shadows that was not really there. In this instance, doubt arises without reflection, and is thus on the plane of pre-reflective consciousness. Systematic doubt, on the other hand, only occurs on the reflective plane. And yet, the pre-reflective act of doubting was necessary before Descartes could even *think* about doubting systematically! Importantly, it was not that, through systematic doubting, Descartes *discovered* a pre-existing 'self' at his core. It was *on the basis* of his doubting that his sense of self was produced. Hence, the self that we produce through our conscious efforts to interpret our actions are first and foremost based on a pre-reflective and more immediate form of consciousness.

In fact, pre-reflective consciousness is necessary for any action to be pursued or, indeed, understood. In order to explore this further, Sartre turns to a third aspect of the production of the self, namely 'qualities'. Qualities include dispositions, tastes, talents, instincts, and tendencies – i.e. that which is often used as definitions of one's character or as rationalisations that explain what kind of a person might act in *this* way when in *this* state. When we have a seemingly continual state of hatred towards a person, the diverse ways in which this appears often results in the construction of particular 'psychical dispositions' (Sartre, 2010, p. 16). In other words, I may come to believe that I have certain character traits that cause me to act in a particular way – because I am hot-headed, I am more disposed towards acting violently when in a state of hatred, for instance. But my 'knowledge' of this temperament only comes about *because* of the way that I have acted in certain situations. Indeed, qualities are produced *on the basis* of the interpretations of my actions in the world. Yet, these qualities do not necessarily determine how I (will always) act. Thus, assigning particular definitions of 'who I am' in light of this are also an example of impure reflections.

For instance, we might think of teaching not only as profession that requires pedagogical and knowledge expertise, but also particular dispositions or character traits – charisma, empathy, articulateness. Teachers are also often expected to cultivate dispositions in their students. In the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines*, this is one of the key areas that teachers are evaluated on. Moreover, teachers need also to 'prove' that such dispositions have been developed in students or in themselves as teachers. But if we are to follow Sartre, then a number of limitations in this line of thinking arises.

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The first relates to how we might measure dispositions. Measurement requires explicitness about a teacher's practices, not only so that they can reflect on what can be improved, but also so that the account of this evaluation is translatable to other domains. But to do so requires a belief in the direct and essential connection between actions, qualities, and who that person 'is'. Let's imagine that a teacher has cultivated the disposition of 'fairness' in a student, evidenced by the way that that student appears to treat others. If in certain instances he does not act in that way, we may say that it is 'out of character', or that 'he is not himself today', or perhaps that more work needs to be done to improve his behaviour. But what if the student is only *performing* these acts of fairness in order to manipulate others, or in order to gain favour with the teacher and with other students for less noble reasons. Surely such motivations would affect our interpretation of his actions, and by extension, our definition of 'who he is'. Since our interpretations are on the reflective plane, they are susceptible to 'impure' reflections. They do not capture a self that is the *cause* of our reflections, but rather, a self that is *produced* by them. Importantly, for Sartre, such interpretations are not to be dismissed as arbitrary, however - they are all that this 'self' amounts to.

Secondly, the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines* contain contradictions in their assumptions about what is cultivated, and in fact, what 'cultivation' means. On the one hand, they call for the holistic development of students such that they can become their 'own person'. On the other hand, students should leave school with certain desirable traits, ones seemingly tied to the maintenance of democratic values (e.g. NCCA, 2015). Sartre offers us another lens here – the idea that whilst the cultivation of dispositions is an inevitable part of the production of selfhood, dispositions do not exist at our 'core', and are fundamentally distinct from the pre-reflective consciousness that does. So even if we *were* to cultivate certain attitudes, does that therefore guarantee how a person will behave in the future? This question becomes central to Sartre's conception of freedom and responsibility, as explored further in the next chapter.

Finally, if we are to understand dispositions as innate and persistent, and if one is completely determined to act in a certain way *because* of these, how then do we assign responsibility for their actions? In his account of bad faith (as explored in Chapter 6), Sartre ultimately denies the deterministic account that dispositions imply. For him, dispositions are not inborn characteristics that determine the 'type' of person I am. Rather, they represent patterns (*choices*) of behaviour that produce the sense in which I am disposed towards certain ways of acting, and that I am therefore a 'certain kind of person'. These choices are contingent, since our way of understanding them depends upon context-specific norms and values (e.g. around their appropriateness). This, too, is central to the concepts of freedom and responsibility.

Importantly, Sartre does not wish to imply that the pre-reflective *cogito* is the 'subject', and the reflected self is the 'object'. Whilst the produced self is not pre-reflective consciousness, the two are nevertheless intimately connected. When Sartre later expands on these distinctions – particularly, as we will see in Chapter 7, between *being-for-itself* and *being-for-others* - he emphasises that these modes of being cannot be understood separately. Also, by referring to this self as produced, Sartre is not suggesting that it is arbitrary in any sense. On the contrary, it is on the basis of this produced self that I exist in the world in a concrete sense. This produced self explains the exposure that I feel when I am self-conscious, when I am hypervigilant of how I am acting, of how I am coming across to others. It is an embodied self that *does* exist, albeit not 'within' us but *in the world*. Ultimately, who we are is therefore not a fixed, unchangeable entity within us. Rather, it exists on the basis of a fundamental lack at the core of our being, one that drives an ongoing self-creation – a perpetual struggle of an inherently unstable consciousness trying to identify itself in a definitive way.

The Self and the Other

Importantly, since my 'self' is in the world rather than 'in me', it is only given on the basis of 'observation, approximation, anticipation, experience' (Sartre, 2010, p. 22). For this reason, Sartre concludes that the produced self is 'too present for one to look at it from a really external point of view' (Sartre, 2010, p. 22). As such, one must always take a 'step back' in order to understand this embodied self, something that can only be done as if I were viewing myself as another person would:[12]

> Am I lazy or hardworking? I will find out, no doubt, if I ask those who know me... Or else, I can collect the facts that concern me and try to interpret them *as objectively as if I were dealing with another person*. But it would be futile to ask the me directly and try to take advantage of its intimacy to get to know it. Quite the contrary: it is this intimacy that bars our route. Thus, 'to know oneself well' is inevitably to look at oneself from the point of view of someone else.

This necessity of looking at oneself through an 'othered' perspective not only demonstrates that the material self exists in the world, but it also shows us that the pre-reflective cogito is impossible to grasp in any fixed or essentialist sense. Indeed, the pre-reflective cogito is 'by nature, elusive' (Sartre, 2010 p. 23):

> [It] never appears except when we are not looking at it…it is never seen except 'out of the corner of one's eye.' The moment I turn my gaze toward it… it vanishes. (Sartre, 2010, p. 23)

In sum, Sartre argues for a distinction between the fundamental pre-reflective consciousness and the self that is produced through the ways in which we interpret actions, states and dispositions in the world. This produced self is often studied in psychology, since it can function as an object of study in a way that the fundamental elusiveness of consciousness cannot. Similarly, the kind of 'self' implied in self-evaluation – that which can be measured, tested, improved – is precisely this produced sense of self. In any situation that involves offering an account of oneself, we inevitably produce our 'self' or a picture of 'who we are', one that often involves taking an 'othered' stance towards ourselves. The important thing is not to overcome this process of production, but to nevertheless attend to the idea that the production itself does not destroy our fundamental freedom and responsibility to *engage* with ourselves, and to accept the inherent unpredictability that our being in the world thus involves.

4.4 Freedom and the Self

Sartre's concluding thoughts in the *Transcendence* mainly concern the implications of these ideas for philosophy and for other relevant areas of study. Ultimately, Sartre believed that he had 'purified' phenomenology by recovering the original transparency of consciousness. By positing pre-personal consciousness as pure intentionality, consciousness is therefore 'nothingness'. There is no longer an 'inner self' as it were, since there is 'no longer anything that can be described as an *object* and can at the same time belong to the intimacy of consciousness' (Sartre, 2010, p. 25). This, of course, differentiates phenomenological from psychological accounts of being a human, the latter of which is most similar to how teaching in accounted for in Part I. Sartre's phenomenological understandings of selfhood can therefore

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[12] Bonnett (2009) considers possible moments of self-awareness without the existence of others. For example, we may come into being 'ourselves' through encountering the natural world (and perhaps recognising my subjectivity as distinct from the existence of a 'tree'). Sartre would also accept this, given that for him, conscious beings are what they are *not.* As I explore in Chapter 7, our 'being-for-others' is an ontological state that does not require the immediate presence of the Other. It is, perhaps, difficult to conceive of myself without this othered stance, since I always and fundamentally exist in the world *with others.*

disrupt this line of thinking, making these seemingly tacit ways of referring to oneself and others open to question.

Sartre admits that this reconceptualization can be quite unnerving, given that it posits each individual as someone fundamentally unpredictable and unstable. He recognises, however, that most of us *do* continue with particular patterns of behaviour. But the very fact that one *can* act unpredictably demonstrates a freedom at our core – a freedom we cannot grasp, and that is therefore inherently unaccountable except through producing ourselves. It is here, then, that we find what Sartre calls 'the absolute and irremediable anguish, this fear of oneself, that in [his] view is constitutive of pure consciousness' (Sartre, 2010, p. 28). Perhaps, therefore, the function of the produced self is practical in that it gives us a sense of something solid and certain, a way in which we feel that we can *know* ourselves and others.

Sartre considers these ideas further through the lens of two of his key concepts – i.e. freedom and facticity – towards which we will now turn.

5

Freedom and Facticity

5.1 Sartre's 'Phenomenological Ontology'

Importantly, Sartre's early work takes a phenomenological approach to his study of being human. This approach is distinct from metaphysics, for example, which aims to establish *a priori* facts by which we can come to deduce the essential nature of reality. Instead, phenomenology focuses on what is it that we *experience* as conscious beings (and not, for instance, whether those experiences are 'right' or 'accurate'). As explored in the previous chapter, this includes our experience of selfhood. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which Sartre's conception of how we *are* in the world leads to his most steadfast idea – i.e. the relationship between freedom and facticity. Towards the end of the chapter, I will consider the implications of this for offering an account of the experience of teaching.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre continues his discussion on the nature of consciousness, an analysis that leads him to surmise two modes of being, i.e. 'consciousness' (*being-for-itself*) and the 'brute existence' (*being-in-itself*) towards which it is directed. This distinction is made clearer in one famous passage in his novel, *Nausea*, where the protagonist, Roquentin, encounters a chestnut tree in the park. Roquentin is taken aback by the sheer 'thereness' of the object in front of him, and begins to feel nauseated when confronted with the brute existence of the tree, its roots '[k]notty, inert, nameless…'(Sartre, 2000a, p. 51), *beyond* their 'function' or the words that we use to describe them. He is grasping at existence in its pure contingency - the lack of any inherent reason or purpose for the tree's existence. When considering him*self*, however, Roquentin sees that he is *not* simply 'there' in the same way that a chestnut tree is. Instead, he is a being *with consciousness*, distinct from the tree as 'opaque to itself precisely because it is filled with itself; is what it is; *de trop*… [u]ncreated without reason for being' (Sartre, 2003, p. xlii).

In the early stages of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre is primarily concerned with a question of ontology or a description of being. In order to 'access' the nature of being, he is careful not to use words that are loaded with meaning, instead attempting to 're-invent' language in order to describe being at its most fundamental level. For this reason, although I (and others) often use terms like 'consciousness' and 'brute existence', Sartre is careful not to do so.[1] Ultimately, for Sartre, access to being can only be understood on the basis of immediate and pre-reflective experiences (e.g. the immediate shame that arises when I am caught doing something inappropriate, or the nausea that Roquentin experiences when the contingency of existence comes to the forefront of his thought). Sartre thus approaches the question of the

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[1] For simplicity sake, I will nevertheless use 'consciousness' interchangeably with *being-for-itself*, and 'brute existence' with *being-in-itself* whilst remaining aware that one is not reducible to another.

lived experience of consciousness through 'phenomenological ontology'[2], an approach that contains particular terminologies that I will first endeavour to explore.

Being-In-Itself and Being-For-Itself
Earlier phenomenologists argue that consciousness 'brings about' the phenomena or the object it perceives – i.e. it 'produces' this object in its meaningfulness. According to Sartre (2018, p. 6), this position does not fully account for an object's 'infinite series of appearances.' If I hold a pear in my hand, I can move it around such that it appears to me as different on all sides - in relation to the position of my hand, where it is placed, the background that frames it. There are also different temporal dimensions to consider – what this pear looked like a moment ago, how it will look in the future. Despite the fact that this pear can appear in an infinite number of ways that do not 'come' to me all at once, I am still able to identify it. In doing so, I must rely on interpreting ('transcending') the pear as its 'totality'. In this sense, we can begin to understand how the *meaning* of the pear and the pear *itself* are intimately related, but at the same time, are not reducible to one another. The pear exists as an *in-itself*, regardless of how (or whether or not) I perceive it. And yet, the *meaning* of that pear very much depends on conscious perception, i.e. my transcendence, or what is also called *being-for-itself*.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, consciousness (*being-for-itself*) is solely the immediate awareness of things, as related to but distinct from *what* it is aware of. Since the meaning of brute existence comes to us immediately, however, it is nearly impossible to talk about brute existence and our consciousness of it as separate. In dividing *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*, Sartre is often accused of maintaining the 'embarrassing dualisms' that the phenomenologists wished to undermine.[3] Importantly for Sartre, both forms of being require each other in order to exist – the *for-itself* is necessary for perception and meaning-making in the world, and the *in-itself* is necessary for the world to be perceived in the first place. In this sense, consciousness as intentionality does not imply that it is 'cut off' from the rest of the world. Where Sartre *does* appear to be dualistic, it is purely conceptual in nature – it says nothing about how it is that we experience the world or ourselves, but rather, is maintained only for the purposes of analysis.

Concrete Nothingness
Because the infinite series of appearances of objects are not immediately present to us, our perception of such objects also involves a perception what is *not* there, and by perceiving what is essentially absent (what Sartre calls 'non-being'), our conscious perception always *transcends* what is present at that precise moment. Imagine that I go to a café to meet a friend, Pierre, who it turns out is not there. I may feel a certain surprise at this. I may question what is going on. Or perhaps, I feel anxious about the situation. Of course, this 'negative judgement' only comes about because of an expectation of Pierre being there, and yet, it would be strange to say that this experience is 'all in my head'. Rather, this experience reveals a reality about

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[2] Sartre has been accused on conflating ontology with metaphysics, particularly in relation to his separation of the two forms of being, most notably perhaps by Heidegger. One tension relates to Sartre's usage of the term 'existent' implies that it does not exist independently of consciousness, but neither is it a 'representation' that exists *in* consciousness. There are also tensions in Sartre that come from his attempts to combine ontology and phenomenology. His ontological approach reduces Being to a set of categories but his conceptual framework is somewhat insufficient to explain what it purports to describe. For Merleau-Ponty in particular, the in-itself/for-itself distinction does not translate into conscious experience but, as Whitford (1979) points out, this is because Merleau-Ponty erroneously saw the 'for-itself' as completely interchangeable with 'consciousness' and 'subject'. Such terms do not fully capture the insubstantiality of the *for-itself* since they are loaded with meaning.
[3] Merleau-Ponty argued that Sartre's ideas very much followed the rationalist discourse of Descartes, maintaining the problematic subject/object dualism. See Stewart (1998) and Whitford (1979) for a more in-depth discussion on this.

the very situation itself, and is what Sartre calls a 'concrete nothingness'. The reactions that arise (e.g. my frustration or perhaps an anxious tightening in my stomach) are pre-reflective. Indeed, they occur immediately, regardless of how quickly I can offer explanations for Pierre's absence.

Such feelings not only signal an encounter with absence, however. They also reveal a 'questioning attitude' that underpins consciousness more broadly - a 'lack' that makes conscious beings distinct from *being-in-itself*. An empty chair does not question situations in this way - it is simply 'there', without a sense of time except for the temporality applied by (human) consciousness in reference to how it will later be used. Indeed, brute existence does not have inherent meanings or justification for its own being. For this reason, it is stable in its existence. On the contrary, consciousness - underpinned by this questioning attitude - is inherently *un*stable. As we saw in Chapter 4, as conscious beings, we are underpinned by pure intentionality, and thus without a stable sense of 'self'. Because of this lack, conscious beings are therefore characterised by *constant striving*.

But human beings are not *only* free-floating consciousnesses. They are also *embodied* in specific (and often fixed) ways. Since humankind are defined by these two modes of being – pre-reflective consciousness and embodiment in the world – their existence is always in tension. In order to examine this, let us look more deeply into the concept of 'lack' that sits at the core of conscious human beings, and how this relates to our being in the world.

5.2 Facticity, Values, and Action

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the relationship between consciousness as pure intentionality and the sense of self (i.e. 'who we are') that is produced through actions in the world is complex. It is not a relation between 'self-as-subject' and 'self-as-object', since this would imply that our embodied selves are merely objects we do not have an intimate connection with. But since consciousness is constituted by a 'lack', conscious beings (herein 'humans') are therefore underpinned by a *lack of identity*. In spite of this, we are persistent in our attempts to understand ourselves, to pinpoint 'who we are' with some sense of certainty, a striving that further reinforces the perpetual instability at our core. This is not to suggest, however, that pre-reflective awareness is 'blind instinct'. Consciousness is always intentional, and thus directed towards the situation in which it exists, referring to what Sartre and others have referred to as *being-in-the-world*.

This situatedness is what Sartre calls 'facticity', and it refers on one level to the unchangeable circumstances of our existence. These include 'facts' that are not necessarily subject to manipulation in any 'physical' sense - our bodies, for example – as well as our situatedness within a particular time in history. Facticity has no inherent justification, and as such, our own existence in the world is underpinned by contingency.[4] In the face of this *lack* of inherent meaning, we are driven, for Sartre, to provide a foundation for our own existence - to justify why we have these particular bodies, why we were born in *this* place, or, indeed, why we were born at all! It is difficult, indeed, to live in uncertainty, and yet such is the so-called absurd condition of humankind. But to say that facticity is contingent does not mean to say that it is arbitrary, nor that it should not be taken seriously. Whilst my situation does not provide inherent justification for my existence, it is nevertheless the *context* in which my consciousness – and, indeed, freedom – is enacted.

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[4] This fundamental groundlessness is not shared by other thinkers (Catalano, 1985; 2010). Descartes seemed to understand this contingency on one level, but by using this as a way to prove the existence of God, he therefore offers a justification for existence. Heidegger also tries to justify our existence (according to Sartre) by claiming that in realising this contingency, one can learn to live more authentically. For Sartre, facticity enables us to realise our freedom rather than our authenticity, however.

Indeed, humans do not exist in the world like objects but are always acting on the world in some way. For Sartre, this is because of the lack at the heart of consciousness, and the striving that this lack provokes. As we have seen, insofar as consciousness always arises within concrete situations, it cannot be separated from facticity. But the continual failure of humans to find a concrete expression of themselves represents this relation as one of constant nihilation, where although I strive towards being concretised in my self in some way, that self is always in question, always falling short of a complete picture of 'who I am'. In this sense, any account I give of myself will always be insufficient.

Ultimately, being human means being underpinned by both consciousness and facticity. Often, however, this tension is obscured in some way, only becoming visible when 'questionable' situations appear. What Sartre means by 'questioning' here is not the kind that comes about via reflection or critical thought. It is an immediate experience that refers to our relation to the external world, the so-called concrete nothingness that we experience when, for example, Pierre is absent from the café. Through such immediate forms of questioning, Sartre argues that, for humans, 'existence precedes essence': I am thrown into the world by birth, and through navigating this existence I continually attempt to formulate an essence or identity for myself – in short, to say 'who I am' - something I strive for but that nevertheless remains perpetually 'incomplete' (Sartre, 2018, p. 136). And yet, this very ability to question myself demonstrates that I have no inherent or 'fixed' self, but only a self is that is continually produced through my actions in the world. This produced self is partly contingent upon others, as we will explore more fully in Chapter 7. But it is also based on the 'fundamental project' that I set for myself, a project that is inseparable from Sartre's understanding of action, value and meaning(-making), as I will now examine.

Action and Values
When Sartre speaks of 'values', he is mainly referring to the ways in which we *evaluate* a situation, and how that situation is therefore brought to light. This depends wholly upon our conscious perception of the situation, an interpretation of which is intimately connected to what he calls our 'fundamental project'. The fundamental project is something we 'choose', but not in the sense that it is selected or decided *before* we act on the world (e.g. 'I want to be *this kind of person* in 10 years' time'). Rather, it arises in the 'very upsurge of consciousness' (Sartre, 2018), only becoming manifest within human conduct itself. All of this makes it difficult to articulate clearly in words. On a fundamental level, the project relates to how we orient ourselves in the world - what it is that we *do* with our lives, what we have committed ourselves to, what options we subsequently see available to us. It gives meaning to all of our actions in the world, providing the context for understanding our conduct, and for the ways in which we (and others) see ourselves. This project is not totalitarian, however. It can also be called into question, even though doing so would cause a crisis where we must redefine all of our life choices, as well as the person we have 'become' by virtue of these.

How does this project relate to the 'lack' at heart of human consciousness? Say part of my fundamental project is completing my PhD. Of course, there are most likely deeper reasons for this – my wanting to be recognised by others, my wish to teach others about the importance of existential theory for matters of education, and so on. This fundamental project is understood in terms of a completed totality, one that is lacking at present. This completed totality orients my actions in various ways, but also how my situation is brought to light. Perhaps I start to interpret my situation through an existentialist lens, in ways that I had not done before embarking on a PhD. Perhaps I also start to define myself in terms of this – an existentialist PhD student! Indeed, this 'lacking totality' not only drives me to continue writing, but to define myself as the person 'I am', as well as the situation in which I find myself. At any stage, this

totality can be surpassed – i.e. I can decide to give up on the project entirely. Indeed, the project (and who I am by virtue of this) is always in question.

Thus, the ways in which we evaluate a situation relates to the often subtle and inarticulable original goals that underpin our conduct. Their relation to the fundamental project means that the concept of possibility is ever present in my actions. Indeed, possibility is a real state of affairs in the world – it is not, as some might think, simply that which does not exist yet, nor something that awaits our eventual recognition or acknowledgement. Since human reality is underpinned by this lack that drives forward our conduct, human beings are perpetually 'what they are not', projecting towards 'what they can be' – i.e. towards possibility. Possibility is nevertheless foreseeable, where certain horizons are open to us *because* of our fundamental orientation in the world. Sartre expands on the conception of possibility in his chapter on 'Temporality', which I will endeavour to (very) briefly account for here.

Time

Time, for Sartre, also arises in the upsurge of consciousness, and is not reducible to the three temporal dimensions we conventionally refer to – the past, present, and future.[5] For the purpose of analysis, however, he explores each separately, first considering the common view of each before offering his own account.

The common view of the past is in terms of something that has happened, something that used to exist but is no longer. Importantly, for Sartre, the past is fundamentally a previous intention of consciousness that belongs to and exists in my own personal history. Indeed, we are never totally dissociated from our past - it carries weight in the present, as something that affects us and that we still hold ourselves responsible for. In spite of this, the past can only be called 'the past' if there is *some* disconnect between it and now. Sartre is, indeed, careful to avoid the essentialist connotations that the continuation of the past might imply - that I am the same person yesterday as I am today, and that it is this that forces me to hold myself responsible for past actions. Of course, this is not to deny that things have happened, and the only sense of an essence we have is with regards to how we once *were* or how we once behaved. But even this is open to re-interpretation. The past is thus best thought of as facticity, one that provides the context in which consciousness exists, and whilst it 'haunts' us, it can nevertheless be transcended in some sense.

In contrast, the present is often thought of as that which simply 'is'. But the present always escapes us, in fact - it is not a series of instantaneous 'nows' (like dots that make up a line), since if we thought of it in that way, then the experience of duration (and therefore time as a whole) would disappear. Being present, for Sartre, is revealed to us once we realise that we are in the *presence* of something or someone – i.e. through the presence of the *for-itself* to the world. By being present in this way, humankind organises and 'temporalises' the world – in short, it brings the world into being *in time*. The present can also be understood as the *for-itself* that disintegrates into an *in-itself* by becoming the past. Because of this perpetual disintegration, we experience a loss of identity with ourselves, and thus turn towards this self in the past as an object of study or as that through which we define ourselves (in perpetuity).

But it is a mistake to think of ourselves in this way, where the future is pre-determined by our drives or our situation, or equally, as that which exists merely in the imagination of humans, completely separate from the facticity of the past or present moment. The future is also an aspect of the lack in consciousness – it makes us realise that the present is never

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[5] Despite considering the three dimensions of time as distinct, Sartre does not wish to suggest that this is how we experience time. Time, rather, is experienced as duration. And yet, time is also inescapably ordered, its three dimensions irreversible. For this reason, Sartre argues that we cannot disregard time's multiplicity – consisting of an ordering of time that we label as 'past', 'present' or 'future' - *nor* the unity of time that we experience in duration.

apprehended, but rather, is always a projection. Since this projection implies that the future is never attained, we are always in a state of 'waiting'. Indeed, this future 'person' is always in question – they are always 'yet to be achieved', always in the possibility of either becoming one way or another, inherently unstable and unpredictable.

For Sartre, none of these temporal dimensions make sense outside of consciousness. Indeed, without consciousness, things would not be 'endowed' with possibilities or a future. Humankind are thus caught within an uneasy tension in their experience of time – as a continual flight from the past as well as a recognition of ourselves as continuing across the passage of time, where our future possibilities leave us in a state of 'waiting' - awaiting the arrival of this future, an arrival that will soon become the past, or perhaps never appear at all! In any case, there is no moment in time in which I am ever at one with myself – I am always defined by this sense of waiting. And whereas brute existence is indifferent to time, consciousness, on the other hand, is always *in* time.

Consciousness therefore shapes the world in terms of our experience of time, as one way in which it organises the world in a meaningful sense.[6] All of this demonstrates not only how conscious beings give meaning to the world, but also how they rely on encountering (and, in some sense, *using*) brute existence in order to do this. Like Heidegger, Sartre understands the world as meaningful by virtue of this encounter. Unlike Heidegger, however, he sees this meaning (although immediate) as ultimately contingent and inherently unstable, and thus, always open to question. Whilst this distinction may seem unimportant at first, it nevertheless reveals the extent to which our entire evaluation of the situation in which we find ourselves depends on our conscious perception of it, and as such, humankind 'being condemned to be free, carries the weight of the whole world on his [sic] shoulders: he is *responsible* for the world and for himself, as a way of being…. the incontestable author of an event or an object' (Sartre, 2018, p. 718, emphasis added). We will return to the question of responsibility later on in the chapter, but first, let us consider its counterpart – freedom.

5.3 Freedom and Responsibility

Sartre's idea of freedom should not be conceived of something 'added' on to human reality, nor something that is cultivated in the way we might conventionally understand 'autonomy', as I will explain in the final section of this chapter. Since it pertains to this very idea of nothingness or 'lack', it is thus an innate ontological condition central to what it means to be a (conscious) human being. Central to his discussion on freedom is the idea that consciousness is pure intentionality, as we saw in Chapter 4. Importantly, for Sartre, every human action is intentional, even those that are accidental in nature, since intentionality does not refer to the reasons or motives for actions, but rather to specific 'endpoints' that orient (and determine the meaning of) that action in the first place. We can agree, for instance, that accidentally taking someone's coat is different than intentionally stealing it. But this entire action only makes sense by virtue of our wider and more fundamental intentions – whether we want to live our lives as a (minor) thief, or perhaps, whether we feel guilty for doing this because it goes against our general conception of the 'good'. It is this fundamental project that the concept of freedom for Sartre is best understood since, as we have seen, this project is something we ultimately choose to adopt or to abandon, despite the difficulties that arise when we try to articulate it clearly in words. This is not because it exists in the realm of the unconscious (which Sartre ultimately refutes, as we will see in Chapter 6) but because it only becomes somewhat clearer once our choices have been enacted. Moreover, the fundamental project should not be understood as

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[6] Sartre's discussion of meaning involves several other considerations as well, of things that simply do not make sense without consciousness – the distinction of different qualities and quantities in particular things, the world as organised in terms of possibility and potentiality, meaning-making through our conventional usage of different things, echoing Heidegger's distinction between 'ready-at-hand' and 'present-to-hand'.

something that 'forces' us to act in a certain way, since it is always open to question. The reason why we do not question it is not because we are unable to, but because we usually have very little reason to do so, or are unwilling to accept the potential crisis that doing so would entail. In fact, it is only when something is 'amiss' that we become aware of our ability to respond otherwise. For instance, a worker does not realise he is being exploited until he conceives of the possibility of revolt. When one is faced with the real possibility of change, our consciousness surpasses our particular situation towards the concrete nothingness of the future, where a new horizon of possibilities is opened up. It is only then that we can adopt a different attitude to our lives, and it is only then that we are aware of our freedom to do so.

Many take Sartre's idea of freedom as suggesting that we have no obstacles or limitations except those that we place upon ourselves. Importantly, however, freedom in the Sartrian sense is ontological rather than practical (Detmer, 2005).[7] It is not simply about the fulfilment of certain intentions, but concerns why we have those intentions in the first place, what is perceived as an obstacle or limitation in light of this, and how we therefore understand the world and ourselves within it. Freedom and facticity are reciprocal, a relation signalling our 'inherence in the world and the world's inherence in us' (Bonnett, 2010, p. 31). Indeed, facticity is a condition for freedom, shaping the ways in which our situation is made meaningful. Sartre takes us through a number of concrete examples in order to explore this further.

Freedom in Situations
Firstly, Sartre looks at the situation of one's 'lived place' in the world. Oftentimes, these so-called 'brute givens' pose as obstacles to practical freedom. I may wish, for example, to live in Paris, but I do not have the money to afford the trip. Sartre does not deny that my lack of economic means is an obstacle, nor the fact that I was born in Dublin and not Paris. At the same time, however, these obstacles can only be understood in terms of a more fundamental freedom – i.e. my freely chosen project to live in Paris (for whatever more fundamental reason), and my very conception of this possibility in the first place. Although I have no control over these contingencies (where I was born), and although they are by no means arbitrary, they only make sense in terms of my fundamental freedom. Related to this is the so-called 'general instrumentality' of the world - that which resists or aids in my intentions being fulfilled, as well as the unpredictability I face in my attempts to do so. Let's say I do manage to acquire the material means to go to Paris, but the transport has stopped because of some global pandemic. These unpredictable obstacles certainly curtail my practical freedom, but the meaning I apply to them depends entirely on my intentions. If I still wanted to go to Paris, I would be bitterly disappointed with this situation. But perhaps I changed my mind – perhaps I realise that the *thought* of going to Paris is better than the *reality* of doing so. In this case, these unpredictable obstacles might be seen more favourably. Of course, there are also what Sartre later calls 'counter-finalities' to consider – unintended outcomes of my actions that, in fact, go *against* my values, thus a quasi-tragic misfiring of action that is difficult for me to take responsibility for. Nevertheless, even these unintended consequences only make sense by virtue of my fundamental values.

Similarly, we might think of the past as an obstacle of sorts. In one sense, my past weighs on me – it is, in fact, the context in which my freedom is enacted. And yet, whilst it is true that I cannot change things that have happened in my past – the circumstances of my upbringing, the mistakes I made – I can in some ways decide the meaning of those circumstances for me. And even though I may still be responsible for what I have done, I am not necessarily determined by what has happened. In each example, therefore, the 'brute given' of the situation may remain the same, but its meaningfulness – how I evaluate and respond to

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[7] However, he is sometimes accused of conflating the two (e.g. Detmer, 2005).

it - only makes sense in relation to my freedom. And yet, our interpretation of the extent to which we are responsible for the past is not only decided by me. Indeed, it is difficult to *not* think of oneself as somehow 'determined' by the way that they 'are' (based on how they behaved in the past). Indeed, the past is often thought of as a predictor of future events, whether or not that actually turns out to be the case. In any case, it is important to acknowledge that we always exist in the world *with others*, where the world itself is made meaningful in an *intersubjective* sense.[8] Thus, Sartre places a special emphasis on the Other as the only possible limitation to my freedom.

One way to understand this is through the example of language. Fundamentally, it is through language that the world has meaning, but since language is something we are initiated into as part of the situation of our birth, it is thus not entirely of one's own making. Using language involves knowing certain laws related to grammar, as well as knowing when and how to use them in order to be intelligible. Language inevitably carries intersubjective values - knowing when and why it is (culturally) appropriate to use certain words, for instance. As Austin (2005) explores, language is not simply a matter of uttering words in a constantive sense but can often involve performing a commitment to oneself and others. It is impossible to live *outside* of language in this sense, and this in turn indicates our inescapable relation with others. But since words only have meaning within certain contexts – a sentence, a conversation - they only make sense because of a particular 'free' act that underpins them. Of course, this is not to imply that we are completely free to construct our own sentences and words in an arbitrary manner. In order to be understood, we *must* limit ourselves to a particular context involving a set range of words we can use - not only in terms of appropriateness, but also in relation to the facticity of our birth and the (albeit contingent) historical factors that have established the *particular* language we speak (e.g. Irish vs. English). At the same time, however, the laws of language are always open to change, to re-evaluation, to nuance. Rather than being fixed in an exhaustive sense, they can be experimented with or re-invented entirely. James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, for example, shows us that such obstacles to freedom are not totalitarian. Through such experimentations, there are, of course, limits to our intelligibility. But our particular use of language - the words we choose to use at a particular time, our choice to at least *try* to be intelligible or to be unconcerned with this, or perhaps to choose unintelligibility as a 'protest' of sorts - are all indications of the fundamental freedom that underpins my action in the world and my response to the context in which I find myself.

In summary, although we do not freely choose the brute givens of the world, and although the meaning of this world is not always of my own making as an individual, this is not then to suggest that we are completely determined by these. For Sartre, our freedom lies in choosing our *relation* to these brute givens, givens that are also the very context in which my freedom arises in the first place.

The 'Questioning' Attitude
For Sartre, the sense in which our actions in the world are always underpinned by our fundamental project means that above all, we are *responsible* for such meaning. Indeed, as we saw earlier, humankind carry the weight of the whole world on their shoulders. Being

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[8] Sartre is sometimes criticised for not taking into account the intersubjective element of meaning-making in the world, or the fact that the fundamental project can involve 'common goals' (something he later considers in his attempts to reconcile existentialism with Marxism) (Stewart, 1998; Whitford, 1979). Merleau-Ponty, for example, argues that whilst Sartre allows for a plurality of consciousness, the fundamental project is nevertheless formulated on an individual basis, and this in turn implies that the meaning we apply to the world is 'subjective' rather than 'intersubjective'. Whilst there are merits to this criticism, thinking of the world and the formulation of our fundamental projects in terms of intersubjectivity does not radically alter Sartre's position. As explored in Chapters 7 and 8, whilst we always exist in relation with the Other, we also respond to this relation as individuals.

responsible in this way reminds us of the fundamental absurdity of our existence in the world, and as such, a subtle sense of anguish underpins our existence. Indeed, the *possibility* of overturning of everything that I value in life, everything that gives meaning to my actions, is always there whether I act on it or not. Nevertheless, it is rare that we explicitly acknowledge this. We may even make attempts to mask it, but for Sartre, 'we cannot eliminate it, since anguish is what we *are*' (Sartre, 2018, p. 84), an idea that is explored more fully in the next chapter.

In *Nausea,* Roquentin experiences a moment of crisis when he begins to reflect upon his fundamental project in writing a biography of the Marquis de Robellon. Roquentin represents the ways in which we come to value our projects in situations where there is no one forcing us to do so except ourselves, and where the reasons we formulate to continue them are as justifiable as the reasons to abandon them. But this was a project that Roquentin had committed himself to – he had organised his life around it and had come to define himself in its terms. As the work unfolds, beckoning him to complete it, it becomes more and more difficult to call it into question, with each written sentence acting as an implicit justification for continuing the project. And yet, in each moment that Roquentin writes or researches Robellon, he is simultaneously a person who *does not need to do so.* He at first tries to avoid reflecting on this, later thinking about his original motivations for writing in an attempt to convince himself that they are still relevant. But gradually, he discovers his lack of desire to undertake this project, and he eventually decides to abandon the book. This decision, and the ways in which his life changes radically as a result, brings Roquentin to the brink of insanity.

Roquentin, of course, could have pressed on, seeing his life as fully determined by the work he *must* complete. He could have allowed himself to be governed by facticity, to distract himself from his concrete possibilities, to yield to the certainty that the project offered. In doing so, it is likely that he perhaps would have been able to momentarily suppress the anguish that arose. Such flights from freedom are ultimately unsuccessful in the long run, however. This is because we always exist in question, and we must therefore make an effort to continually maintain this sense of stability whilst in the midst of a permanent possibility of being otherwise.

The freedom here is also concerned with a certain temporality, one that creates another layer of anguish. The person 'I am' at present is a projection, and as such, it depends on future intentions. But there is nothing that necessarily forces me to have these *particular* intentions – I choose things knowing they might not be completed, that I might fail or give up on my decision to follow through. This is also true of my relationship with the past – I might make a past resolution to give up smoking, but since this resolution is of the 'past self', I experience a 'rupture' between the person that resolved to stop smoking last week and the person now with the cigarette in her hand. Since nothing prevents me from breaking this resolution, I must decide and commit anew in each moment. I am thus always in a position of questioning and deciding, and it is this that signals our fundamental freedom and, indeed, responsibility.

Responsibility for the World
Sartre argues that we cannot be *but* responsible for both ourselves and for the world – to continuously renew our commitment to projects, or to abandon them entirely, in how we evaluate a situation, and in how those situations are therefore brought to light. For Sartre (2018, p. 79):

> I cannot have recourse… to any value to set against the fact that it is I who maintains values in being… I have to actualize the meaning of the world and of my essence: I decide it alone, without any justification or excuse.

The Other, of course, plays a role in the meaningfulness of situations as well. But despite the limitations they place on us, we are free to respond to this relation. We are free, for instance,

to appropriate or to discard the recognition that they confer on us. We are also free in our decision to be intelligible to them or to push the boundaries of what *is* intelligible in the first place. Intelligibility is in some ways a collective responsibility - an act of expression as well as an attempt at understanding - but the overarching decision to be so is still determined by the individual's response – and, indeed, responsibility.

Sartre's conception of freedom thus implies that we are *always* responsible for how it is that we are in the world, as well as for the world itself. We may not have decided to bear this responsibility, but *because* we were born, we are 'condemned to be free'. Towards the end of the chapter of *Freedom and Responsibility*, Sartre even takes the somewhat extreme stance that we are *all* responsible for wars, even if we ourselves were not the perpetrators.[9] What he means is that we are responsible for our attitudes towards war, and for the actions we take in light of these. Although we have no real control over the facticity of that situation, we *do* have control over how it is we respond to it, and how we make sense of it. Above all, there no way for us to avoid responding - or in this case, to take a stance.[10]

Although this freedom and responsibility may seem in many ways terrifying, it is also profoundly liberating. And yet, Sartre also recognises that we do not live our lives in perpetual anguish - it may only come about momentarily and, indeed, rarely. Importantly, the discussion here is not necessarily concerned with an ethical or political sense of freedom, but more so a description of *how we live.* Sartre *does* attempt to make more explicit ethical considerations, however, perhaps most saliently in his post-war lecture, *Existentialism and Humanism.* I will briefly turn to this before considering what all of these ideas might mean for the lived realities of teaching, and how we might account for this.

5.4 Existentialism and Humanism

Sartre's conception of freedom and responsibility softened considerably after the Second World War. Although he never altogether abandoned the idea that we are free to respond to perceived limitations in our surroundings, his Marxist influences forced him to reconsider the (perhaps overly) individualistic account in *Being and Nothingness*, particularly in relation to ethical demands. Certain tensions appear in his later works as a result of this, and his attempts to combine existentialism with Marxism is widely disputed.[11]

Of course, even though Sartre may have sought to be purely ontological in his earlier works, there are undeniable ethical questions at stake. The circumvention of freedom in the form of bad faith is often seen as the 'cardinal sin' (Catalano, 1985, p. 17) of existentialism, for example. Equally, however, his discussion on freedom and responsibility may be read with a less accusatory tone. Nevertheless, *Existentialism and Humanism*, delivered at Club Maintenant at the pinnacle of his popularity and barely a month after the official end of the Second World War, perhaps represents Sartre's most explicit attempt to consider the ethical implications of his earlier work.

Much of what Sartre says in *Existentialism and Humanism* was criticised on philosophical grounds - he himself later regretted its publication, in fact (Warnock, 2003).

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[9] Sartre revises this position in his later works, differentiating between the innocent victim and the implicated agent (See, for example, Sartre, 1992). Again, the emphasis here is on an ontological rather than 'practical' or 'political' sense of responsibility.

[10] Camus' (2007) short story, *L'Hôte*, also explores such themes in relation to the responsibility of those embroiled (innocently or otherwise) in the Algerian struggle for independence. For an analysis of this, see: Brady (2017).

[11] Some have remarked that Sartre's attempts to combine both theories marked the end of existentialism. Others see this later period as a continuation and enrichment of his previous writings. For a collection of short essays and interviews on this topic, see Sartre (2008a). These later texts will not be considered in depth here. Perhaps if we consider the context in which Sartre and his literary counterparts were writing, however, one can be more forgiving of the somewhat 'extreme' account of freedom and responsibility in his earlier works.

Heidegger's (2008) *Letter on Humanism*, for example, explicitly rebukes the association of existentialism with humanism on the grounds that the very idea of humanism harbours essentialist claims that existentialism sought to overcome. Existentialism was also not universally popular – it is seen as vulgar in certain circles who interpreted it as promoting a life without constraint, as not only impractical but dangerous. On the one hand, Sartre accuses those who attack him of suppressing those who 'meddle in matters above [their] station' (Sartre, 1973b, p. 25). But he also laments that existentialism seems to have become a trend without any real substance, so loosely applied that it means nothing at all. He thus sets out to offer a more accessible vision of what *Being and Nothingness* entails, as well as expanding this in order to take into account its ethical import.

Whilst difficult to systematise, Sartre claims that the commonality around existentialist thinkers rests on one simple tenet – that existence precedes essence, and that all philosophy should therefore take the human subject as its starting point. The first principle of existentialism is therefore subjectivity, and a belief that each member of the human species is a *project*. Sartre expands on the individualistic account of this project in *Being and Nothingness* by claiming that, if an individual is responsible for who they are, then they are also responsible for *all*. In choosing to create a particular 'image' of myself, I am affirming and signalling a commitment to something that I believe to be valuable, and as universally enlisting on some level.

Because of this, we must think carefully about what we do, and the extent to which we are comfortable in taking responsibility for ourselves, particularly since this will come to define us *beyond* our ability to do so. Both Sartre and de Beauvoir admit to feeling the weight of responsibility for future generations who may misinterpret what each says (Blakewell, 2016). But even though many of us do not think that our words and deeds will have all such significance in the future, we should nevertheless always act *as if* this is the case. In this sense, the way that we act is always in address to the Other. As we will explore in Chapter 7, one is not only pre-reflectively aware of oneself, but also of others – I am immediately aware of the Other who recognises me in a certain way, through whom I come to know myself, an 'intimate discovery… [that is] at the same time a revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts mine' (Sartre, 1973b, p. 45). In this sense, our choices not only rest on the intellectual and linguistic apparatus that we can avail of in situations, but the stakes that are involved in the choices also signal a responsibility for both myself and for others. If, for example, one were to ask what would happen if everyone behaved in the way that I did, then a disturbing anxiety might arise. But this anguish need not be debilitating, nor lead to quietism or inaction. Importantly, it is not that anguish results from having to act – rather, it is the very condition of action itself.

To exemplify this, Sartre refers to his own tormented student who asks him advice on whether he should go to war. This is a war that had taken the life of his brother and had revealed his father as a collaborator, a war that had left his mother with no one but himself. To fight in the war meant fighting for a greater collective end. To stay with his mother, on the other hand, was a more concrete and immediate choice. Within this choice implies two 'kinds' of morality – one of sympathy and personal devotion, and one concerning the importance of collective action.[12] There is no external guidance that can make this choice for him, and both decisions could be justified depending on one's overarching values. So what is it, then, that helps us decide? Perhaps a kind of instinct or 'feeling'? Frustratingly, however, one can only know the strength of one's feelings after the decision has been made. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard (1986, pp. 91-92) makes a similar observation:

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[12] Camus was faced with a similar dilemma in relation to the Algerian war for independence. Whilst he agreed with the collective end of the independence movement (although not with their violent means), he nevertheless stated that: 'My mother could be on one of those trams (that is bombed). If that is justice, I prefer my mother'. This also reveals two kinds of (equally justifiable) ethical positions (Camus, as cited in Brady, 2017).

> If anyone on the verge of action should judge himself according to the outcome, he would never begin. Even though the result may gladden the whole world, that cannot help the hero; for he knows the result only when the whole thing is over, and that is not how he becomes a hero, but by virtue of the fact that he began.

On top of this, deducing the sincerity of my feelings is difficult - whether I feel relieved because I think it was the right thing to do, or because I am no longer in the tormented state of indecision. What about an appeal to abstract guidelines? This is possible, but to do so is nevertheless a choice, as well as the ways in which we interpret and apply this to concrete situations. Dialogue with others does not necessarily help either - in choosing an advisor, we already have some expectation of what they might say, and this shows us that on some level our decision has already been made. For Sartre, it is important that we 'live without hope' for a new and unfeasible horizon of possibilities, for something other than what is possible in the realms of things I cannot control. To live without hope does not involve the illusion that all possibilities may be realised, but simply that we confine ourselves to a form of committed action based on what we *can* do. It is through this that we define ourselves since, for Sartre (1973b, p. 47, emphasis added), 'we are nothing *but* our purposes'.

Humans can therefore only be defined by virtue of their existence, an existence that consists of a series of undertakings and a set of relations, including our relation with the situation in which we find ourselves with others. Theories that focus on pre-determined reactions or on 'patterns of qualities or phenomena' that determine human behaviour are problematic, since they are (in danger of) turning humans into an 'object' indistinguishable from other objects in the world, with values applied to rather than created by them. This makes Sartre's humanism radically distinct from the essentialist kind that is advocated by Kant (Kakkori and Huttunen, 2012). For Sartre, human beings are not ends in themselves but instead, as an existence that precedes an essence, are continually in pursuit of 'transcendent aims' *outside* of themselves.

In moral terms, we therefore exist within a kind of 'creative' situation, analogous with artistry. A (true) artist might not rely on a pre-defined image before making his art, and as such, it becomes coherent in the course of their drawing. Just as this artist is responsible for what they produce, we too are responsible for the values made manifest in the course of our committed actions. The artist exists within a particular 'undecided' orthodoxy – in relation to the tools at their disposal, the way they hold the paintbrush, the training and education they received that serve to 'confine' the choices they make. Nevertheless, such orthodoxies are always negotiated with rather than 'passively' adopted. Perhaps the artist wishes to be intelligible in their artwork, or perhaps they wish push the limits of what *is* intelligible. Such decisions represent the freedom – and, indeed, responsibility – at the core of our creative endeavours.

Morality, like art, involves both creation and re-invention. One cannot decide *a priori* what must be done in all concrete cases – indeed, there is often no sufficient or exhaustive guidance that would tell us *definitively* what must be done. One is therefore obliged to invent a 'moral law' for oneself, or to choose to adopt one that has been created elsewhere. All of this, for Sartre (1973b, p. 50), tells us something deeply about what it means to be human:

> Man [sic] makes himself; he is not found ready-made: he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and he cannot but choose a morality, such is the pressure of circumstances upon him. We [existentialists] define man only in relation to his commitments.

Does this make it impossible to judge others for what they do? Sartre admits that this is true in some respects. In one sense, with whatever someone chooses to do and to commit to in

sincerity, it is not possible to say that another choice is preferable for him. This is *the* moral problem – it has never been adequately solved over time, nor will it be solved in his lecture, it seems. Ultimately, for Sartre, '[l]ife is nothing until it is lived, but it is yours to make sense of and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose' (Sartre, 1946, p. 54).

Within this is the possibility of creating a human community – and for this reason, Sartre declares that existentialism is a form of humanism (despite ridiculing humanism in *Nausea*). Sartre's particular interpretation of humanism in existentialism reminds us that there is no legislator but the individual themselves, that we are abandoned and thus responsible for what we commit ourselves to, not in the sense that we must turn back upon ourselves, but rather, 'by seeking, beyond [oneself], an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realisation, that [one] can realise [oneself] as truly human.' (Sartre, 1973b, p. 56).[13] This is the optimism of existentialism – a doctrine of action and commitment, a declaration against self-deception, embracing a life without hope and without despair.

5.5 Freedom and Facticity in the Classroom

There are several educational implications that follow from Sartre's account of freedom and facticity. I will consider some here (though not exhaustively), with the ultimate aim of opening a space in which to account for the lived experiences of teaching in existentialist terms. This will be more fully explored in the final part of the thesis. First, I will begin by anticipating some possible misunderstandings of Sartre's thought.

In many educational circles, most notably the liberal tradition in philosophy of education, autonomy is seen as something that education systems should strive to cultivate in students (see, for example, Dearden, 1972; Callan, 1988; White, 1990; Standish, 2003). Whilst there are differing and sometimes competing ideas about what this entails, it is often coupled the idea that the maintenance of desirable (e.g. democratic) values depends in part upon children acquiring autonomous dispositions through schooling (Hand, 2006; 2017). Sartre's account of freedom does not imply a deficit model of humans, however, based on the idea that there is something 'absent' in our capacity to act freely until we are taught otherwise. Unlike the above conception of autonomy, freedom is an innate ontological condition of being human. It cannot be separated from action, where it is through action itself that this freedom is made manifest.

Thus, for Sartre, there is no choice *but* to act in every situation, regardless of how desirable these actions or responses might be. A discussion around what is desirable or not is ultimately contingent upon the situation in which it is embarked upon, interpreted in light of one's fundamental projects, and therefore impossible to account for in any exhaustive or *a priori* sense. This is not to say that a discussion on ultimate values has no place in education. As we have seen in Chapter 2, without these wider normative questions about what education is for, we are in danger of only thinking about educational practices in a purely 'technological' sense (Biesta, 2007; 2009). Importantly, however, what Sartre is focusing on is *how people act*, and not how we might desire them to act, or how we might differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' actions on the basis of this.

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[13] The question of whether we should take such an anthropocentric view of the world exists in post-humanist thought. I am not sure if Sartre would necessarily disagree with these positions. Firstly, Sartre's focus is on the individual and not 'collective' sense of being human. For instance, he argues that it is absurd for us all as individuals to take credit for the so-called 'human' achievements, as though our membership to the same 'species' allows us to do so. Secondly, if he sees that the fundamental aspect of humankind is consciousness, then any being we consider to be sentient might also be included in this argument. There are, however, many interpretations of what consciousness counts as, with panpsychism being one that would perhaps call into question the anthropocentrism that appears to be at the heart of Sartre's understanding of consciousness.

Instructing students to act in a certain way is sometimes accompanied by a concern that, in doing so, educators must 'bite the indoctrination bullet' (Hand, 2014, p. 521). Implicit in this is the assumption that the student passively re-enacts the instructions given. But Sartre's conception of freedom allows us to re-evaluate this where, instead, the so-called passive student is *actively choosing* to respond to directions in particular ways - in consent to them because they are unaware or are in denial of their capacity to respond otherwise, or because they want to be seen as an 'ideal student', perhaps. Or it may be that they may resist these instructions to some degree. And whilst power relations are an inevitable aspect of the teacher-student relationship, we can most certainly think of examples where such resistance occurs, demonstrating that this relation is more complex in a concrete sense. In any situation, therefore, the freedom of each participant must be recognised as that which is *already* there in the relationship to begin with.

The later post-structuralist movement, particularly that which is influential in sociological research in education, would probably voice certain disagreements over Sartre's account of freedom. If we consider Foucauldian thought (e.g. Foucault, 1990; 1991; 2004; 2010; 2014), for instance, to what extent can freedom even be conceptualised in a context where so many of our gestures are facile, where so much of what we think and do is on the basis of unconscious, internalised norms of behaviour? Sartre anticipates some of these objections in his denial of the unconscious, as explored in the next chapter. But also, Sartrian freedom is not necessarily something to be celebrated. Writing at a time when the very definition of freedom was being usurped by far-right nationalist agendas, Sartre undoubtably recognised the danger that this freedom could result in (Sartre, 1973b). But he also recognised the more subtle ways in which it is made manifest – resisting populist or consumerist conceptions of freedom (even in small ways), refusing to see oneself in the insipid ways that those with more power do (Barrett, 1962). One is thus always responding to the situations in which they find themselves, even if it just means imagining how things might be different. This, as mentioned, represents an ontological rather than practical conception of freedom.

In the context of education, what does it mean to say that schools, teachers, and their students are 'free' given the demands that are placed on them by current educational discourses? This is particularly complex where, as exemplified in Chapter 2, certain norms of communication are imposed on the ways that one might account for themselves and their practices, norms that are based on technicist understandings of teaching that stand in stark contrast with what being in a classroom feels like. But even though it appears to be difficult to think outside of the language encapsulated in *School Self-Evaluation* policies, this is nevertheless always negotiated with on some level.

But *how* might we negotiate with these technicist accounts of teaching? First, I will consider some problematic dualisms that underpin educational policy, and the ways in which Sartrian thought might challenge these. Secondly, I will show how paying attention to the perception of absence is something vital and yet missing from the accounts of classroom practices that focus purely on what is explicit. Thirdly, I will consider a different way of conceptualising professional judgement in light of this. Finally, I will consider how Sartre's conception of freedom, facticity and the fundamental project might help us rethink not only the problematic assumptions and expectations of mechanisms such as school self-evaluation, but the very experience of teaching itself.

Problematic Dualisms
One of the more obvious dualisms in self-evaluation literature is the division between the objective and the subjective. As we have seen in Chapter 2, evidence plays a key role in the formation of judgements about one's practice, and is seen as required in order to identify and measure potential areas for improvement. Evidence is also seen as vital in target-setting.

Oftentimes, this involves setting numerical targets, where student learning is reduced to that which can be calculated in a clear and verifiable manner. Coupled with this is the perceived need to build teacher capacities in order to collect and analyse necessary data, and to inculcate them into a particular language by which such objectivity is not only assured but adopted confidently and willingly. As Bonnett (1994, p. 80) remarks, this conception of objectivity is conflated with 'scientistic' objectivity, where if a teacher 'cannot produce the hard 'proof' for their claims… [they] have sometimes been regarded as merely subjective, inferior, or illusionary.' The use of evidence is thought to ensure that self-evaluation reports do not fall into the latter category, an aim that is also in part focused on assuring the wider public that internal review is as robust as external inspections. But what, precisely, might be wrong with this?

As indicated, Sartre is sometimes accused of maintaining similar dualisms in his own thought, with thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty once characterising him as a 'faithful Cartesian' (Whitford, 1979). This is perhaps most clear in his distinction between brute existence (*being-in-itself*) and consciousness (*being-for-itself*). Such a distinction is not a difference of two substances, however. But perhaps most importantly for Sartre, when we encounter things in the world, we *immediately* associate them with some form of institutional understanding – their conventional use, or the features that are immediately obvious to us that suggests 'what they are', despite having never encountered them before. Because of the so-called infinite series of appearances, we never encounter brute existence in its totality, but always through interpretative lenses. When we think about what teachers are required to demonstrate with evidence, such interpretation is also an inescapable component of what is brought to light. On a more surface level, we might think about this in terms of what the teacher decides to focus on – the so-called 'areas for improvement' (DES, 2016b). Let's say she decides to focus on improving student behaviour. Is this 'problem' something that exists as an objective 'fact'? Or is it a decision made by the teacher in line with her own values about her role and her capacities to educate her students? Or, perhaps, both?

Firstly, since misbehaviour can only be understood in terms of norms and expectations of how students should behave, it cannot be understood as brute objectivity independent of subjective interpretation. Secondly, both the area the teacher focuses on and the intervention itself are decisions made by the teacher, over and against other things that she could focus on instead. If her interventions are premised on the idea that the responsibility for behaviour is ultimately down to the students, she might come up with interventions that make manifest this belief whilst ignoring her own approaches and demeanour in the classroom, or other potential explanations of the 'issue'. Both are apprehending the same 'data', and yet both explanations may be justified. What makes them distinct is in relation to the values of the person involved, and their understanding of the issue as informed by their fundamental project. Thirdly, the extent to which an intervention 'works' - *even* if measured numerically (e.g. the students spend less time disrupting the class) - only makes sense in terms of the original project, i.e. the desire to make students behave in a certain way, based on particular values about what education is for, and so on. This is not to say that there is something necessarily wrong with the teacher wanting to improve behaviour, nor that she is insincere or untrustworthy. It is simply to show that the separation of objective and subjective here makes little sense, since anything we might call 'objective' can only be understood in terms of the wider fundamental project that underpins the teacher as a subject in the classroom.

But what happens when such strategies for improvement are decided at a societal level, using more accurate and comprehensive forms of data? Are they more valid? School self-evaluations in Ireland, for instance, are required in part to follow the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* (DES, 2017b) – i.e. to implement interventions that improve the overall literacy and numeracy rates in student learning across all subject areas. According to the 2018

PISA results, Ireland is ranked 4th out of the 36 participating countries in terms of reading literacy (OECD, 2018). One could assume, then, that these interventions have worked. But again, since implicit in this are particular values about what education can 'do' for wider society, albeit whilst not decided at an individual level (although 'adopted' by the individuals involved), the 'objective facts' here make little sense without an appeal to the so-called 'subjective values' that are necessary in order for this data to make sense in the first place. Of course, all of this is a very surface understanding of the depth of so-called 'subjectivity'. The very use of numbers, for example, is a '(inter)subjective' interpretation of brute existence – it is not brute existence itself. Perhaps what self-evaluation policy seems to be getting at, however, is a form of honesty rather than objectivity. Indeed, if we do not ask teachers to be evidence-based, how can we trust that their accounts are genuine? We will return to this question in Part III.

Closely related to this is the dualism of cause and effect. As we have explored in Chapter 2, there are numerous assumptions in self-evaluation policy that relates to how certain interventions lead to certain levels of effectiveness, both of which are measurable in an explicit sense. For instance, one of the statements of highly effective practice in relation to 'Learner Outcomes' asserts that '[s]tudents' enjoyment in learning is evident and arises from a sense of making progress and of achievement…[t]heir engagement with learning contributes to their sense of well-being' (DES, 2016b, p. 23). How do we determine the direction of causation, however, when two 'directions' are implied here? Is it that learning (cause) leads to well-being (effect)? Or is it that well-being (cause) motivates learning (effect)? Do we therefore need to focus on improving learning or improving well-being? Different answers to this question reveal fundamentally different conceptions about the purpose and promise of education. In this sense, the cause/effect relationship is not neutral, but inescapably related to what we value in the educational process itself. Any measurement that is therefore based on this will also involve such ambiguities. But also, brute existence itself is indifferent to cause and effect. It only comes to be understood in this way via consciousness as that which produces it in part as an explanation of a situation. It therefore makes little sense to talk about it as somehow removed from the interpretative powers of conscious beings.

What underpins these dualisms is the distinction between 'fact' and 'value'. In simple terms, this divide surmises that there are facts that are indifferent to our opinion or belief, that we come to know via scientific observation, and that are therefore conducive to demonstration through accurate forms of evidence. Distinct from these are 'values'. These are normative in nature, and can only be studied through the field of ethics, for instance. For some philosophers (e.g. Hume (2012)), statements of fact ('is') do not naturally correspond to statements of value ('ought'). Later traditions, such as logical positivism, argue that facts are fundamentally value-free. Others, however, such as those associated with the pragmatist tradition, argue that this distinction is not so clear cut. This is because facts can only be understood in terms of the wider, ultimate values that underpin them (See, for example: Gorski, 2013; Doeser and Kraay, 1986). In other words, our very conception of 'fact' or 'truth' directly relates to desirable ends that are fundamentally normative in nature. Although Sartre appeals to the irreducibility of 'brute existence', he nevertheless understands that our conscious experience of the world can never be removed from the act of valuing, and for that reason, the fact-value divide makes little sense when attempting to describe concrete experience.

School self-evaluation policies contain examples that imply a fact-value divide, particularly in terms of the very definition of effective practice as 'what works'. It implies, for instance, that assessment data as 'factual' - a form of numeric, objective evidence that reveals the extent to which students have learned something. But what this fails to take into account, however, is that assessment is an *interpretation* of learning, and not a direct correlation with some kind of learning that takes place in a world independent of values (Brady, 2018). Also,

the very decision to base such judgements on assessment data relates to what Biesta (2007; 2009) calls the 'ultimate values' in education, those that help us decide what assessment is effective *for*. Whilst we may be able to say that certain interventions have 'worked', we can only do so if we understand that our very definition of what it is working for is related to a particular purpose. But it is not necessarily the case that that which purports to focus only on what is 'effective' has *no* purpose in mind. Rather, it may simply be that this aim is problematic or reductive – the idea that education is purely for the cultivation of certain skills necessary for economic growth, for example. In this sense, 'values' and 'purposes' are always inherent to whatever it is we decide to do in education.

The discussion about what aims education *should* have is important, but it is not the focus of our discussion here. Rather, what Sartre attempts to show us is *how* these values come to be. For Sartre, values do not exist outside of human action, but arise with the very upsurge of consciousness as an aspect of this 'lack' at our core. Rather than arbitrarily decided prior to action, they are part of this wider fundamental project which orients our actions, made manifest on the basis of our striving towards this project as a totality yet to be attained. Values are not simply related to what I think is important as aims or purposes. They are the very things that give meaning to my situation and to the 'facts' that appear within it - it is through them that I make sense of the world, and by which the world comes to light, where 'how and why things matter to us personally – our own evaluation and understanding of them – is a reflection of our genuine concerns, either already present, or evoked by the situation itself' (Bonnett, 1994, p. 112).

Concrete Nothingness

As we have seen, school self-evaluation policies tend to focus on what is there – what is visible, what can be verified by measurement or tracked through improvement plans. What they do not take account of is what *is not* there. By this I mean Sartre's idea of concrete nothingness, where despite all of the (infinite) appearances of objects not being available to us at once, we still recognise what they are. Indeed, in all encounters with brute existence, consciousness transcends the present moment towards what is *not* there through interpreting what is amiss. Importantly, this is not simply a judgement 'in my head'. It says something real and concrete about the situation in which we find ourselves. This experience of absence arises immediately within us through a 'questioning' attitude that exists at the heart of conscious beings. When a student is missing from class, I experience their absence not directly through explicit forms of questioning, but rather, pre-reflectivity (e.g. through the emotions that immediately arise within me upon realising they are not there). Of course, this is in part mediated by an expectation of presence – indeed, I would not have noticed their absence if I wasn't expecting them to be there. But all of this is premised on the more immediate sense that initially arises from the very fact that they are *not there*.

How might something like a school self-evaluation targeting student engagement account for this experience? Does the feeling itself even matter, given that it does not help us improve the situation? Perhaps on some level, this is true. And yet, attending to those feelings are first necessary for an explicit improvement plan to even be considered. If we simply did not notice or care that that student was absent, then it is likely that the very idea of increasing student engagement would not have been selected as part of the improvement plan in the first place. Moreover, the feeling that arises from a concrete experience of absence is intimately tied to our fundamental values – i.e. to *how* I evaluate the situation. Perhaps I think that this student is disruptive and, on some level, I am relieved that they are not in my class that day. Or perhaps I genuinely care about their schooling, and thus, I am anxious not just about their absenteeism now, but how that might impact their future. Thus, this fundamental sense in which the student is absent may manifest itself differently - as anxiety, disappointment, or relief - but is only

identified as such after the immediate reaction itself. By attending to those immediate reactions, one may come to realise the values that underpin their practices. Yet, we should be careful in how we account for these given that once we start to talk about values in a more explicit sense, we are already on the reflective level and are therefore interpreting rather than 'capturing' the fundamentally pre-reflective sense in which they arise.

Thus, whilst policies tend to focus only on what is explicit in the classroom, so much of what goes on includes experiences of what is *not* there. We cannot understand teaching and learning practices without this and, as such, we cannot adequately measure these practices if our measurement only focuses on what is 'present', especially when what is present is thought to be devoid of any 'subjective' valuation. Importantly, this sense of concrete nothingness is also revealing of the very lack at our core, the fact that we are always in a state of questioning and of deciding, and that our actions in part involve an inherent instability that also cannot be captured in any fixed sense. This, in turn, has implications for one's judgements of situations in the classroom.

Professional Judgement

Like the concept of autonomy, professionalisation in teaching often implies a deficit model, where professional judgement, for example, is a capacity that is 'lacking' until cultivated or developed through training and other means. According to self-evaluation proponents such as McNamara and O'Hara (2008), it is through such capacity building that 'trust' in teachers is warranted. In some contexts, the Aristotelian idea of 'phronesis' helps to explain professional judgement over and against an idea of professionalism as a 'technique' (see, for example, Dunne, 1997), where it involves 'practical wisdom' in the ability to achieve certain ends, but also to reflect on those ends in reference to broader understandings of the 'good life'.[14] Sartre's ideas are arguably not so far removed from this. Of course, Sartre would deny any one conceptualisation of the good life since, for him, these wider sets of values are ultimately contingent upon individual situations. Nevertheless, these values inform and orient our actions in an implicit rather than explicit sense, as implied in the idea of phronesis. As such, professional judgement cannot be considered as removed from concrete situations. It is not an abstract capacity or skill developed in individuals, nor is it a 'technique' applied without due reference the person involved or to the situations in which it is enacted.

For Sartre, since humans exist in the world as conscious beings (and *not* as things in themselves) they are always acting on some level. Often, judgements are not decided *a priori*, where values are articulated as a clear and coherent guide for action. But this does not imply that judgement is 'blind', however, since as we have seen, judgements always occur in response to concrete situations, our evaluation of which is intimately tied to our fundamental project. To return to the student misbehaviour example, the teacher may be said to use her professional judgement in the sense that she is appealing to what is 'there' before her (i.e. the 'objective fact' of the disruptive student). She may also be considered 'professional' if she consults guidance on what the best course of action will be, implementing an intervention on the basis of this and continually monitoring its effectiveness. But all of this is premised first on her identification of *who* is misbehaving, and why this 'fact' is even important to begin with. Hence, whilst her approach is not problematic in and of itself, the implication of what counts as professional judgement in light of this is dubious. Judgement itself is premised on us identifying what needs to be addressed in the first place, and is therefore *already* framed by particular values. Indeed, these values do not always appear in an explicit sense but as *already there* in the actions we take, and in our very understanding of the obstacles that appear before

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[14] As we will explore in Chapter 9, however, 'phronesis' itself is often understood as a technique or a skill in accountability literature.

us. In order to explore this further, let us return to the relationship between freedom, the fundamental project, and the situation in which this is enacted.

Freedom, Facticity and the Fundamental Project

As we have seen, Sartre's account of freedom is not about the capacity to fulfil certain intentions but instead relates to the ways in which one understands and responds to their situations. It is intimately tied to the notion of intentionality, not as rationales for acting in particular ways, but as 'horizons' towards which we are oriented in the world. Intentionality is always located within facticity – those brute and unchangeable aspects of our lives. Perhaps, in the case of education, facticity also includes the particular 'discourses' that currently define what being a teacher means.[15] This situation is, in fact, both the context and the origin of our freedom. But the ways in which I respond to this situation rests upon how I interpret it, not only in terms of how the situation immediately appears to me, but also, the ways in which I am oriented at more fundamental level – i.e. in relation to my fundamental project. As we have seen, this orientation can be called into question or abandoned entirely, despite the fact that it rarely is. In fact, oftentimes we consciously avoid calling it into question, since to do so would also lead to a collapse of everything that we understand about the world and ourselves. Yet, the very possibility of doing so persists in the background of our thoughts and experiences.

In the case of teaching, our interpretations of a situation, and the wider values that underpin these interpretations, may also be called into question. The teacher who witnesses misbehaviour in her class might be confronted with an outburst from a student who remarks that 'she doesn't care about them'. Such confrontations can (although not always) offer a different understanding of the situation that the teacher was perhaps unaware or in denial of before. Perhaps such confrontations lead to a series of realisations that there was something 'amiss' in her original assessment of the situation - it wasn't the students who were the 'problem', but her! Maybe she realises that, in fact, she *doesn't* care about the students, and she begins to wonder if she should really be a teacher. Of course, this is not to say that this *should* happen, nor that her new assessment of the situation is any more 'accurate' than the previous one, but rather to exemplify that what gives meaning to a situation is ultimately oriented in terms of our freedom to interpret it, an interpretation that is nevertheless not immune from the 'questioning attitude' at the heart of conscious human beings.

There is therefore a reciprocity between the facticity of the situation and the freedom in terms of our responses to it. Within this, the Other is also present, each with their own fundamental responses to both the situation and to 'the person that I am' within it, something I will return to in Chapter 7. This is not always easy to account for, not only because of the limitations of language, but because of the anxiety that it might bring to the surface. As such, it is often easier to seek comfort and security in the language of certainty, a language epitomised in the ways in which teachers are sometimes expected to describe and reflect on classroom situations. In the domain of 'Teachers' Individual Practice', for instance, they are expected to report on the extent to which they have delivered 'highly effective instruction…eliciting deep student engagement… skilfully manag[ing] their own input to optimise student participation and response' (DES, 2016b, p. 26). Of course, one might account for these in relatively simple terms – the students spoke up in class, and therefore this meant that student participation was achieved. But the ways in which we account for these might also be called into question, something that involves deeper existential questions about what we are doing. Am I a good teacher? Do I talk too much? Do I annoy the students? Do they like me? Do they understand me? Do I understand them? Such questions are not insignificant when it comes to thinking

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[15] Of course, Sartre was not a poststructuralist and thus, I am extending his argument here in a way that he himself might not have. However, I will return to Sartre's connection with poststructuralism in Chapter 8.

about what one experiences as a teacher. But self-evaluation, with its focus on articulating practices through a language that relies on explicitness that these very questions do (and can) not, therefore limits the extent to which so much of what is central to teaching is captured in our accounts.

The fact that fundamental projects are open to question means that we must continually strive to hold our precarious sense of certainty intact. Oftentimes, however, we are successful circumventing the anxiety this involves, in part through a form of self-denial that Sartre calls 'bad faith'. Let us consider this concept more deeply.

6

Bad Faith

6.1 Uneasy Tensions

Bad faith is sometimes described as the antithesis of authenticity, but although authenticity is implied throughout Sartre's work, it is never fully (or, at least, clearly) defined.[1] Instead, Sartre takes a 'via negativa' approach, creating a space in which to unveil the furtive ways that bad faith functions in our lives. Much like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche before him, Sartre's writing can function as a way to 'awaken' his readers to the false consciousness of bad faith. In one sense, therefore, Sartre's discussion on bad faith is educational in nature, modelling a way in which to unmask the inauthentic ways in which we often tell stories about ourselves. But overcoming bad faith entails a courageous and persistent struggle so as to 'lucidly perceive the games that one's own consciousness continually plays' (Gordon and Gordon, 1999, p. 238). In many ways, paying close attention to the inauthentic ways of accounting for oneself is a form of continual (self-)criticism, a concept we will return to in Part III. Sartre adopts various linguistic forms in order to do this – from his literary works to his denser and more taxing philosophical tomes. Undoubtedly, some of his examples of bad faith are histrionic, but since they serve as caricatures of his main ideas, Sartre can clarify them in a more accessible and concrete way.

Broadly speaking, bad faith is a coping mechanism or a way to circumvent the anguish that an awareness of our fundamental freedom and responsibility can evoke. As discussed, consciousness involves a constant desire to overcome the 'lack' at the heart of humankind. This has led Sartre to refer to humans as a 'useless passion', given that this striving of consciousness is ultimately futile. As a result of this, humans exist in an uneasy and ambiguous tension across three planes of being. Firstly, as conscious, embodied beings, we are both situated in the world as well as perpetually responding to and transcending this situation. In order words, we exist within an uneasy tension between 'transcendence' and 'facticity'. Secondly, an ambiguity also underpins our existence in the world with others. My conduct – and, indeed, 'who I am' – is always considered from two disparate viewpoints. Indeed, as further described in the *Notebooks for Ethics*, Sartre (1992, p. 94) comments: '*on the same plane*, I am a specific object and a free subject, but never both at once, and always the one haunted by the Other.' I might attempt to solve this by reducing another's opinion of me to a mere distortion, but, as we will see in the next chapter, these attempts are always in vain. Finally, humans also exist both *in-the-midst-of-the-world* and *in-the-world* – i.e. as fundamentally contingent but as also necessary, given that we are a 'being which causes there to *be* a world' (Sartre, 2018, p. 58) in the first place. For Sartre, *being-in-the-world* more closely captures the fundamental nature of

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[1] Towards the end of *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre indicates that he has planned to write a book dealing on 'ontological ethics' where the idea of authenticity would become clearer. This book never came to fruition, but some related ideas are discussed in *Existentialism and Humanism* and in the posthumously released *Notebooks for an Ethics.*

consciousness, where free conscious beings always project the meanings they wish to assign to their situations, both in the future and in the past. But this creates a paradox – for example, the past as something that we are responsible for in one sense, but not some unchangeable entity or ultimate determinant of our (future) conduct, given that it is always open to re-interpretation. It is in relation to these tensions that Bell (1989, p. 32) notes, '…being human is itself a challenge many would prefer to avoid.' And it is in confrontation of such challenges that 'bad faith' arises.

6.2 Bad Faith and Self-Deception

Bad faith is premised on an attempt to assimilate these paradoxes of being, in part by denying the ambiguous tensions that exist between them. In the *Notebook for an Ethics,* Sartre (1992) states that individuals are in bad faith, for example, when they try to define themselves solely in terms of their facticity, thus denying their freedom to respond to this. But they are also in bad faith when they deny their situation as the context in which their freedom is enacted. One character from the *Roads to Freedom* trilogy who may be said to exemplify bad faith is Daniel Sereno. When first introduced in the *Age of Reason*, he is described as:

> …a hard, forbidding character, but underneath it all… a shrinking victim pleading for mercy. It was odd, he thought, that a man could hate himself as though he were someone else…When he despised himself he had the feeling of detachment from his own being, as though he were poised like an impartial judge above a noisome turmoil, then suddenly he found himself plunging downwards caught again in his own toils (Sartre, 2001a, p. 85)

As revealed towards the end of the first novel, Daniel is gay, something he sees as a fixed aspect of who he is but is nevertheless unwilling to embrace. As such, he is embroiled in self-contempt. This self-contempt allows him to separate himself from his so-called 'condition', where he is thus able to act as an impartial spectator passing judgement on his 'sins'. Daniel encourages his justification for self-hatred by committing various atrocious acts, including his purposive attempts to sabotage the lives of others. He is first introduced concocting (but eventually abandoning) a plan to drown his cats in the Seine. He tries to guilt the protagonist, Mathieu, into marrying his mistress Marcelle, despite knowing that this would be detrimental to both characters. Towards the end of the first novel, Daniel marries Marcelle not out of sympathy, but out of the sheer effort of destroying the solid persona that Mathieu is seen to represent in his eyes. It is only towards the end of the first novel - when he finally admits to Mathieu that he is gay - that he starts accepting it himself. He reasons this as follows:

> Well I… wanted to see the effect it would produce on a fellow like you,' said Daniel, clearing his throat. 'Also, now that there's someone who *knows*… I shall perhaps succeed in believing it.'" (Sartre, 2001b, p. 301)

Rather than relying on his own ontological freedom to fully embrace his sexuality, Daniel requires the existence of the Other in order to do so. This, for Sartre, may be characterised as a form of bad faith in which one sees oneself as fully determined by their facticity on the one hand, but perhaps more importantly, by only accepting this facticity once another has characterised them in the same way.

Whilst bad faith is often interpreted as a kind of 'self-deception', it is therefore altogether more complex than this. In order to draw this distinction out further, Sartre (2018, p. 88) formulates a distinction between lying to oneself and lying in general:

> We do not lie about something we do not know… we do not lie when we get something wrong. The ideal of the liar is, then, a cynic in his consciousness, who affirms the truth in itself and negates it in his words, while negating this negation for himself.

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Unlike lying to oneself, lying in general is deliberate and therefore conscious, where the liar *must* be in full comprehension of the truth being altered. It thus involves a 'cynical consciousness', where one first affirms something as true and then denies this through explicit words or gestures. It is connected to a kind of performance – '…rehearsed; [with] the character he is playing in full sight of his interlocutor' (Sartre, 2018, p. 89). Not only must the liar be conscious of his actions, he must enact the lie with complete clarity, consciously hiding something from another who takes this enactment as truth, '[making] profitable use of the ontological duality between my own self and the Other's' (Sartre, 2018, p. 89). Lying in general is thus not restricted to inner consciousness, but always bears relation to things or to persons 'outside'. Lying to oneself, however, is lying turned inwards.

Daniel seems to inwardly acknowledge his sexuality (albeit without ever naming it) and yet he carefully performs in such a way as to disguise this. Indeed, in punishing himself for 'what he is', he must first recognise that which he is trying to disguise. Thus, in lying to himself, he is therefore *consciously choosing* to avoid admitting that he is gay, thereby curbing the anxiety that this acknowledgement might entail. In fact, he wills certain roles into existence for this very purpose - willing himself into 'bad faith'. Since lying to oneself appears to operate in such a way as to conceal an unattractive truth from oneself, it seems to have the same structure as lying in general. But as Sartre points out:

> … in bad faith… the duality of the deceiver and the deceived is not present here. On the contrary, bad faith implies in its essence the unity of *single* consciousness… From this it follows, first, that the person to whom one is lying and the person who is lying are one and the same (Sartre, 2018, p. 90).

Bad faith is not a 'state' that is attained by a person once and for all, but rather, must be perpetually willed into existence, actively[2] sustained against the constant threat of collapse. It involves a 'constant and distinctive style of life' (Sartre, 2018, p. 91) akin to putting oneself to sleep - purposeful, and yet, 'consists… in avoiding reflection upon [its] purpose' (Bell, 1989, p. 35). But this raises a number of questions. Since consciousness is always translucent to itself, then to be in bad faith must also mean being *conscious* of being in bad faith. But, curiously, in being conscious of the lie that one directs towards oneself, in what sense are they really lying? Is it possible, therefore, to maintain the dual role of being the deceiver and the deceived in a single unity of consciousness?

6.3 The 'Unconscious' Explanation

Self-deception might make sense if there is an unconscious 'censor' who functions like a 'passport controller' (Sartre, 2003, p. 81) to conscious awareness. The unconscious allows for a 'psychic dualism' where the person can be a stranger to themselves, and to therefore act as both the deceiver and the deceived. According to Sartre, Freudian psychoanalysis posits that one is not always in the position to understand their (unconscious) drives. Nevertheless, the unconscious has a concrete reality that in part explains 'who I am', and it can therefore be analysed. My reasons for lying may remain alien to me *until* I have performed this act explicitly and until I have studied these acts in order to 'uncover' those original motives. For Sartre (2018, p. 93), the unconscious thus 'introduces into the depths of my subjectivity [an] intersubjective structure', where psychoanalysis is necessary in order to establish a mediator between the conscious and the unconscious, an 'Other' who can synthesise this apparent opposition in the individual. As such, one can only know one's reasoning through the eyes of the Other.

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[2] There may be instances, however, where one does not explicitly realise that they are in bad faith. Nevertheless, failing to realise something is not the same as being unable to *ever* realise it. Hence, there is a subtle but important distinction between explicit awareness and consciousness.

Such forms of analysis 'can succeed only if I mistrust any kind of intuition, and apply to my case - *from outside* - abstract schemas and rules already learned' (Sartre, 2018, p. 92). With an increased accuracy in psychoanalytic hypotheses, greater distrust in our own account of ourselves is then necessary, as well as a greater reliance on 'technicians' to put us right. But if, as we have seen in Chapter 4, consciousness is translucent, this would make an 'unconscious consciousness' impossible. How else might we explain the ways in which we are selective about which 'drives' to allow (e.g. hunger) and which to supress (e.g. perverse sexual desires)? Importantly, the suppression itself renders such drives to the unconscious only *after* the initial pre-reflective awareness of what to suppress. Selectivity therefore *must* be conscious – it must be consented to on *some* level, and as such, it must involve an element of conscious choice.[3]

Bad faith as a form of unconscious self-deception cannot be explained through the lens of psychoanalysis, although Sartre (2008c) later admitted that his understanding of the unconscious here is based on a reductive interpretation of Freud. Nevertheless, bad faith does not relate to some 'veiled end' that can only be comprehended obscurely or through the Other, even if our acting in bad faith is not always at the forefront of our thinking. How is it, then, that bad faith appears? And – perhaps more interestingly – *why* do we lie to ourselves in this way? In order to explore this further, Sartre turns his attention to concrete examples that serve to exemplify this phenomenon in a more everyday sense, showing us that, in all its complexity, bad faith is nevertheless an intimate part of how we live.

6.4 Forms of Bad Faith
The examples Sartre offers here are not uncontroversial. They are ripe with problematic assumptions in relation to class, gender, and the nature of sexual orientation. The ways in which Sartre assigns responsibility in these situations is dubious in many respects. For one, he does not always fully consider the stakes involved in choosing to act freely or in choosing to remain in bad faith. In the first example, the woman *could* be straightforward with a man about his unwanted advances. But there are all sorts of justifiable reasons (and perhaps even fears) to explain why she might not do so. With regards to the waiter, one *could* simply give up their job. But perhaps he chooses not to so as to acquire the material means to live a potentially more authentic life in the long run. In the final example, the question as to whether or not someone's sexual orientation is defined on the basis of an innate essence or 'drive' (much like any other 'facticity') or whether we should understand it on the basis of action is a widely debated topic that I will not get into here. Nevertheless, these controversies have led certain commentators to differentiate between 'weak' and 'strong' notions of bad faith (see, for example, Catalano, 1983). Moreover, bad faith need not necessarily be an accusation, but perhaps a demonstration of *the ways in which we act*. As such, the discussion here might be read as an attempt to offer some explanation of this instead of providing us with the material to judge how one *ought* to act in given situations. In any case, let us look at the examples as Sartre presents them before considering the possible application of this concept to the educational context.

The Situation and the Freedom to Respond
For the first example, Sartre describes a woman on a first date with a man. This woman is aware of the man's intentions towards her, intentions that she finds humiliating, 'crude' and 'naked' (Sartre, 2018, p. 98). Because responding to his advances is difficult, she finds various tactics in which to avoid doing so. She focuses solely on what is discreet in his attitude, telling herself that his behaviours towards her are borne of respect for her as a whole person rather than as an object to be admired. She also avoids the 'temporal possibilities' of his conduct by

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[3] In support of this, Sartre explores instances where a patient resists treatment the closer the psychanalyst gets to the 'objective truth' of his inner drives. See, for example, *The Man with the Tape Recorder*, a controversial publication that appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1969.

restricting herself to what is happening in the present moment, disarming the things he says which indicate this desire, and only considering their explicit rather than underlying meaning. When the man takes her hand in his, the situation is made more pronounced, and she finds that she *must* respond in some way. Instead, she remains passive, divorcing her soul from her body, seeing his hand as a purely inert 'object' devoid of any intention. Thus, she neither acts in resistance nor in consent. Ultimately, however, she is *actively making herself passive*, and in this sense, she is in bad faith.

A similar example features elsewhere in the *Age of Reason.* The protagonist, Mathieu, spends much of the novel lusting after Ivich. This is an unrequited lust that Matthieu implicitly acknowledges (disgusted as he is about his own behaviour) but avoids admitting. Ivich is by no means a likeable character – she often displays wanton cruelty towards others, for instance. After failing to impress her at a Gauguin exhibition, Mathieu kisses Ivich in a taxi. At this moment, she becomes a passive object of sorts, reacting mechanically to what is happening at that moment and refusing to mention it afterwards. In not responding to the situation, Ivich certainly seems to be in bad faith. But what about Mathieu? He knows the way Ivich feels about him, hence his sense of shame in how he behaves around her. He knows that he will not be forgiven for doing this, aware that Ivich dislikes being touched. But in acting upon his freedom by attempting to seduce her, he fails to acknowledge the facticity of the situation and, indeed, for the ways in which one accounts for the freedom of the other in their own actions. This, too, is an example of bad faith.

The distinction with these examples, however, is the extent to which one is attempting to deceive oneself. Little is known about what goes through Ivich's head – indeed, it seems as though she remains 'blank' during Mathieu's unwanted advances. Mathieu, however, avoids admitting something he *knows*, since doing so would mean having to more seriously attempt to put an end to the outward manifestation of his desire, as well as potentially surfacing feelings of self-loathing (indeed, for Mathieu, it is easier to think of Ivich as the one who is in the 'wrong'). In the case of the woman in the previous example, it appears that she is actively trying to convince herself that the man's intentions are markers of respect rather than objectification. Such a reaction may be justified (although Sartre does not necessarily entertain this idea), and it is therefore an example of how we might sometimes lie to ourselves in situations where one is vulnerable and exposed. The distinction between active and passive, however, is not so sharp. In the case of both the woman and Ivich, the characters actively choose to remain passive in order to avoid having to take responsibility for their freedom to respond in their situation. Mathieu might think that he couldn't quite help himself, that his desire for Ivich left him with little choice but to act upon them. This justification, too, is a means by which he shirks responsibility.

Both the woman on the date and Ivich constitute themselves as an inert presence in the world, a passive object amongst other objects. In doing so, both avoid the ambiguous sense of *being-in-the-world*, where one must accept oneself as projected beyond the present, towards future possibilities. In one sense, we are who we were in the past, even if we think of the past as a facticity we can now respond to and reinterpret. As discussed in Chapter 5, however, the weight of the past exists in the present, and it is thus something we unavoidably take responsibility for. A failure to accept our responsibility to act in response to the past is also an example of bad faith. But so too is the idea that we do not, in some sense, 'make' ourselves in the future. In the *Age of Reason*, Ivich often describes herself as having 'no future'– not only in terms of her failure to maintain her place in medical school, but also quite literally so (Sartre, 2001a, p. 187). Without acknowledging her future orientation in the world, she can avoid taking responsibility for her actions in the present, and it seems unavoidable that Ivich should remain in bad faith as a result.

These examples serve to demonstrate that bad faith utilises the tensions that *already* exist in the structure of being (human) – between facticity and transcendence, between *being-in-the-world* and *being-in-the-midst-of-the-world*. For Sartre, this means accepting 'human reality as a being that is what it is not, and that is not what it is' (Sartre, 2018, p. 101). In some sense, there will always be moments in which we come to recognise this, but it is how we act in those situations that count. The opportunities that arise in which this recognition is possible are often suppressed, such as in the case of the man who makes his intentions direct and obvious to the woman on the date. Arguably, however, in this example, the concrete complexity of the situation is greatly reduced. Indeed, there are undeniable power dynamics at play. The women faced with unwarranted advances from the man might 'freeze' and feel herself unable to respond in any way, not as a conscious choice, but as a result of a bodily reaction that is more akin to fixed characteristics of our biological makeup. But although one might say that the man is certainly reprehensible in many respects, it does not *necessarily* follow that the woman's agency is removed completely, even if those limitations on her agency appear to be so overwhelming. Acknowledging the extent to which the very fact of human agency allows us to *respond* to and *evaluate* such situations - and how one is thus inevitably *responsible* - is the crux of Sartre's entire project.

Roles and Representations
The second example employed by Sartre concerns a waiter who is 'a bit too precise… a bit too attentive' (Sartre, 2018, p. 102). His behaves like an automaton, imitating its 'inflexible exactitude'. This person, however, is merely 'playing *at being* a café waiter'– a performance intimately connected to an idealised version of what that entails, in part based on what paying customers demand. Indeed, for Sartre (2018, p. 103):

> …the public demands [him] to actualize [functions] as a ceremony… We can see how many measures exist, to imprison a man in what he is. It is as if we lived in the constant fear that he might escape from it, that he might burst out and suddenly elude his condition.

What the waiter (and, indeed, the customers) fail to remember is that this waiter is *not* just a waiter in the way that an 'inkwell is an inkwell'. The waiter can contemplate and make judgements with regards to his situation. He knows what being a waiter means, and the acts he must perform in order to *be* a waiter (e.g. waking up at 5am, smiling enthusiastically at customers). These meanings are not 'brute facts', but only exist because of human consciousness, as intimately related to how we interpret situations more generally.

Our understanding and enactment of roles are intimately tied to ideals, where we come to know the functions of a role through its 'ideal' representation. Think of the famous characters from movies that we often idealise in teaching – John Keating in *Dead Poets Society,* or Erin Grunwell in *The Freedom Writers*. Indeed, these images of ideal teachers are not just inspirational for those entering the profession. They also carry with them a particular definition of what that role necessitates. These necessary conditions of a role may be implicit, and, of course, they do not necessarily need to come from famous movie characters, but also our own experiences as former students, or perhaps through training or more explicit criteria that delineate effective practices. Roles nevertheless relate to a certain 'performativity', one in which the expectations of that role pre-determine how it is we behave once we adopt it, often stopping us from thinking about these roles – and, by extension, ourselves - in any other way.

The adoption of such roles is an inescapable part of any profession. Roles are also a part of most social situations. This is because role-playing is intimately connected to the ways in which our selves are produced as always, in some sense, with the Other in mind. In *Words*, Sartre refers to his own upbringing in light of this, and the roles he inhabited both as a 'writer' and also as a 'son':

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> I used to lie on my stomach, facing the windows, a book open in front of me, a glass of water with a dash of wine to my right and a jam sandwich on a plate to my left. Even when alone, I was performing… In the evening I was asked: 'What have you read? What did you make of it?' I was expecting this, I was in labour and I gave birth to a precocious remark… when [the grownups] were not there, their future gaze came in through the back of my head, came out again through my pupils and shot, at floor-level, along those oft-read sentences which I was reading for the first time. Seen, I saw myself: I saw myself reading as one hears oneself speak (Sartre, 2000b, p. 46).

These examples are also a form of bad faith, since they involve reducing ourselves to particular functions, and to the same level of 'being' as inert objects. These is not to say that we should admonish ourselves for doing so, however. There is no reason to doubt that one might do so with best intentions in mind, like the teacher who is convinced that these roles 'work' for students. It would be interesting to suppose what Sartre might say about a waiter who is also a struggling artist, who acts in accordance with what a 'good' waiter might look like (*actively* reducing himself to these pure functions in order to do so) such that he can afford more 'authentic' endeavours. Moreover, since these roles are not just individually produced and performed, but are also *institutionally* imposed, the question of the place of responsibility in these cases is, perhaps, not so clear cut. I will return to this at the end of the chapter.

Performativity does not preclude sincerity, however. We may be tempted to say that the measure of our sincerity counts as an opposition to bad faith, and that aiming towards a more sincere adoption of our roles can therefore put us in good faith. But this is a kind of 'idealisation' of sincerity, one that conflates the person one *wants to be* with the person one *is*. To refer to oneself in terms of a 'self-actualised ideal' is to also posit one's being as an *in-itself* - a pure function 'to be attained', a fixed essence or identity that I may eventually become 'one' with. Pre-determining a path we set in attempting to achieve this ideal assumes that our identities can be fixed *at some point*, that it can be fashioned or moulded in order to achieve a stable sense of self. But this, too, denies the freedom that always underpins the ways in which we act. It also denies the extent to which ideals are freely adopted and can thus be freely abandoned, much like the fundamental project that orients our action in the world.

Of course, there are also less sincere motives for being sincere. Calling oneself 'sincere' may have an instrumental purpose - allowing us to stave off criticisms for our decisions, for instance. It is certainly common for a person to acknowledge their faults whilst immediately exclaiming, 'at least I'm honest!' On the one hand, this double act allows us to grant ourselves the moniker of sincerity. On the other hand, it implies that, despite acknowledging our faults, one is not responsible in making any effort to change them, or indeed, to respond to them in any genuine sense. Such faults thus take on a fixed but fully conscious character, and yet seem less reprehensible and thus less likely to be addressed.

The waiter, as we saw, fashions himself as a *being-in-itself* in terms of how he behaves, despite the sincerity with which he adopts his role. This also involves pretending that his duties or tasks are not free choices (e.g. the choice to wake up at 5am or to go back to sleep). Instead, he sees these duties as nullifying his ability to act otherwise, where 'I can be one only in the neutralized mode… by mechanically making the *typical gestures* of my condition as I aim through these gestures… at being a café waiter' (Sartre, 2018, p. 104). Importantly, this denial of freedom is necessary in order for him to sustain himself in his role as a waiter. But by not transcending his facticity, he is also failing to constitute himself as *beyond* those conditions. Indeed, one is never purely 'one attitude' that one exhibits, nor one action or a (set of) function(s). In calling himself a waiter, he is not being dishonest, but in thinking of himself *only* in those terms, he is in bad faith.

Sartre also draws on an example of the sincere, attentive student here to demonstrate why the pure performativity of a role can be problematic. This student has his eyes 'riveted on

his teacher, all ears' (Sartre, 2018, p. 104). But he exhausts himself in playing this attentive role, missing out on all of the other constitutive factors which make him not only a pupil, but a *person.* His hypervigilance and the attention he pays to *being attentive* means that he no longer hears anything that the teacher is saying to him. In other words, this performativity invades what he does, and indeed, *who he is*. Like the waiter who performs in a way in order to preserve his function, the student also performs in accordance with the functions of the 'sincere student'. Performativity may seem to be inescapable in much of what we do, but it is nevertheless (in this case at least) a kind of bad faith, *even if* it is carried out sincerely.

Action and Essence

Finally, Sartre describes a gay man who is plagued by an intolerable sense of guilt, much like Daniel in the *Roads to Freedom* trilogy. In order to avoid the anxiety that comes with recognising his inclinations, he refuses to admit that they define who he is. He offers various excuses for his sexual exploits – his past sexual activities were merely 'mistakes' or 'experiments'. In doing so, he can accept that he has performed certain actions whilst also denying the meaning that may be assigned to them. This man has a so-called 'sincere friend', who criticises his apparent hypocrisy, demanding that he recognise 'what' he is. Importantly, Sartre is not discussing whether or not the man *should* feel ashamed, or whether he *should* be proud to accept who he is. He is also not necessarily paying attention to the context in which one might come to feel disgusted by their sexual inclinations – i.e. the political, social, religious, or wider cultural discourses that causes him to feel ashamed. In any case – who here is in bad faith, the sincere friend or the gay man?

If we take the example of the gay man, one could argue that he *does* recognise his actions in that he struggles against these, and in doing so, he is also struggling against being defined as a *thing-in-itself*. Instead, he recognises that his acts do not constitute for him a fixed essence. His future is not fully determined by the 'facticity' of his sexuality, since there are multiple choices to be made in response to this, or multiple ways in which to evaluate the situation. Of course, some of these are more desirable than others. But the point here is that, even if there is some 'essential facticity' about a person, they always have the possibility of choosing how to relate to this – how, indeed, to respond to one's embodiment in the world. Nevertheless, Sartre takes issue with the idea that this man *needs* to constantly escape from himself, that he feels the need to 'go beyond' his inclinations in order to avoid the judgement from the collective Other. This denies the paradoxical nature of his own existence – the inescapable tension where 'one is not what one is, and one is what one is not'. As Sartre (2018, p. 111) states:

> To keep constant account of what one is amounts to a constant disavowal of oneself; it is to take refuge in a sphere in which one is no longer anything but a pure and free act of looking, the goal of bad faith…is to put oneself out of reach; it is an act of flight.

What about his sincere friend? For Sartre, he also represents something problematic, since in wanting the man to admit to 'who he is', he is also asking him to define himself in an essentialist way. The motives for doing so might be suspect, based on his own indulgence or self-satisfaction in being able to proclaim his sincerity in comparison to the 'hypocrisy' of his friend. But even if there were more innocuous reasons for his behaviour, he is inevitably denying the freedom of the Other by defining him solely in terms of his sexuality. As we have seen, being sincere does not mean avoiding bad faith, particularly where it is seen as a fixed characteristic. If, however, we think of sincerity as something we persistently enact – for instance, we persistently 'check' whether we are being sincere about ourselves or our motives – then this may, in fact, allow us to call into question the bad faith through which we often account for ourselves. I will return to this in Part III.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, consciousness is always defined by a 'lack' that bad faith utilises in order to sustain itself in contradiction. The example of the 'ideal' serves to exemplify this. On the one hand, the ideal is something essentialist; a fixed 'image' towards which we strive and hope to eventually achieve. But *because* it is an ideal, it is always beyond our grasp. In bad faith, the ideal is posited as both fixed and unattainable, an impossible merging of the *in-itself* and the *for-itself*. But how we sustain ourselves in relation to something impossible? In the last section of this chapter, Sartre turns his attention to something fundamental about bad faith that has since been overlooked – the idea that bad faith is, indeed, an example of 'faith'. Faith is not a result of cynicism or scepticism (where we believe something because we are sceptical of ever knowing it). But of course, it is not a kind of certainty for that same reason. How is it, then, that we persuade ourselves to have faith?

6.5 The Faith of Bad Faith

Firstly, it is important to understand that bad faith is a *project* rather than a fixed state of affairs. It is not, for example, that I am only in bad faith once I attain the 'ends' of my project or when I have persuaded myself that these ends are attainable. Rather, bad faith is ultimately an *unnamed decision*, something that we decide in such a way that we *believe ourselves not to be in bad faith*. This is because 'naming [it] what it is' would constitute *good* faith. And yet, it seems impossible to persistently *be* in bad faith if we cannot persuade ourselves or acknowledge that that is the case. Bad faith must therefore be a decision that is perpetually willed into existence, but that at the same time, cannot be too obvious. In order to sustain it, there must be some peculiarly non-persuasive evidence. Under what conditions might this be possible?

Catalano (1985) offers a helpful example. Say a student believes that they lack the ability to do mathematics well. He fails his first examination and is left with the decision as to whether he will put in any effort into passing the second time. He wonders what will happen if, in spite of his effort, he *still* fails. In order to avoid a situation where he would have to confront failure once more, he decides that he is simply not good at mathematics. This fixed image of himself as being incapable of mathematics is an example of bad faith, if, of course, we accept that his perceived inability is due to a lack of responsibility, effort or motivation and not some innate facticity like his intelligence, for instance. As a result of this image – which, in this instance, he himself knows on some level to be dubious - he doesn't make any effort to study and, of course, fails his second attempt at the exam. This second failure, premised originally on the project of bad faith, then serves as evidence of his inability to do mathematics. And although this evidence was designed through bad faith, it nevertheless persuades the student of his 'inescapable condition' of being poor at mathematics, regardless of its veracity. The project of bad faith thus manages to maintain itself by deciding and enacting the nature of its own evidence. This aligns itself with the nature of faith more broadly, in that faith, in order for it to *be* faith, it must never be fully persuasive.

Let's look at this from another angle. Say I believe in good faith that Pierre is my friend. Of course, I cannot know for certain whether this is true (e.g. I may look to his behaviour as signifying this, but I still cannot be certain). Believing thus means that I 'give into my impulses to trust' (Sartre, 2018, p. 115), as is often necessary in navigating relationships with others. But ultimately, my beliefs are decisions, and in order to maintain them, I must act *as if* I am certain of them. To make matters more complicated, all of this occurs within the unity of a single consciousness, where strictly speaking, lying to oneself is impossible. Such is the very nature of belief as inherently paradoxical – '[t]o believe is to know one believes, and to know one believes is to believe no longer' (Sartre, 2018, p. 115). Good faith is not necessarily immune from this, since every belief falls short - 'we never believe in what we believe' (Sartre, 2018, p. 116). Believing intentionally and consciously in impossible beliefs does not dissuade me

from acting on them, however. The various examples we have considered thus far show us that much of what we do and much of what we act on is, indeed, on faith.

So what does it mean to be in 'good faith', then? According to Santoni (1995, p. 110, emphasise added), good faith is 'an *attitude* that is open to the metastability of consciousness, to the ambiguity and incompleteness of all belief, to critical evidence… an attitude that confronts and affirms, rather than flees from, the freedom and responsibility to which (for Sartre) we have been abandoned'. Good faith is therefore not fixed a character trait that determines how a person is and will always be. It is, however, also a prerequisite for what we might call authenticity, if we understand the authentic life to mean an acceptance that 'no matter how tragic… human action [is] the root of all our accepted values.'(Sartre, as cited in Catalano, 1996, p. 171).[4] This, as we will later see, has important implications for how it is that we might account for ourselves and our practices.

6.6 Being Who You Are in the Classroom

The crux of the issue, then, relates to how we think of ourselves, and the extent to which we are willing to take responsibility for this. What might this look like with more modern examples – and, indeed, in the context of education?

Globalised technological advancements, for example, have given us a new range of choices in 'being who we are', choices that are often marked by a pernicious but subtle form of consumerism. Social media influencing is now a potential career choice, where the influencer's sole aim is to 'sell' a particular brand or product, and where, oftentimes that 'brand' is actually the individual themselves. These individuals are very much defined by the needs of the market - by what is trendy, and by the ways in which they will be viewed by the wider public in light of this.[5] Stemming from this is a culture of pseudo-individualism, similar to the kind that was forewarned by Kierkegaard, of which bad faith is very much apart. Although, as we have seen, disenchantment calls a function-determined form of identity into question, the individualism that replaces this is nevertheless aligned with complex identity profiles that we adopt. These profiles are not necessarily 'fixed' as such but are regulated by the market, allowing for seemingly greater flexibility and choice, and the increased possibility of adopting various roles as a result. Given the fact that our access to these profiles has been enlarged through our increasing use of technology and social media, they have become an intimate part of our own self-understanding. This, indeed, demonstrates that such profiles are more than simply 'options' to choose from. Rather, they give us a language through which we can account for ourselves, and in doing so, they allow us to adopt an identity that is intelligible to others.

What does 'bad faith' look like in contexts where there are more choices to 'be who we are', and where a more nuanced language for expressing oneself is incorporated into our own self-understanding? When such choices are tied to the process of marketisation, is this problematic, or does it, in fact, allow us to be more 'authentic'? Perhaps our more conventional understanding and usage of the term 'authenticity' is a form of bad faith in and of itself, like the concept of sincerity outlined above. Indeed, in thinking of ourselves or our identities as 'authentic', to what extent do we perpetuate a fixed idea of ourselves as an 'authentic person'? Moreover, are these forms of identity engaged with on a conscious level, or are they merely

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[4] Many important commentators have accused Sartre of failing to elaborate on the connection between 'good faith' and 'authenticity' (e.g. Catalano, 1996; Santoni, 1995; 1997). These are interesting discussions, but I do not have the space to consider them at length here. I will, however, touch upon an understanding of 'good faith' and 'authenticity' in relation to the concept of parrhesia in Chapter 8.

[5] Not all of these trends are (intentionally) malicious, of course – increasingly, influencers have used their platforms to talk about a range of important issues, from feminism to climate change to the growing levels of mental health issues amongst young people.

adopted in an unthinking sense? How do we then become aware of this, and to what extent does a lack of awareness impact on the degree to which we can be held responsible? Implicit in this discussion is the question of how it is possible to account for oneself, something we will explore more fully in Part III.

What about the educational context today? Do we also see more pervasive forms of bad faith stemming from the marketization of educational institutions, alongside their normalising functions that may be seen to perpetuate pseudo-individualism? Or has the massification of education allowed more access to newer ways of thinking about and accounting for oneself – as someone who is *more* than their particular class, gender, or race, perhaps? These are all interesting questions that I do not have the space to discuss here. Instead, I will consider 'micro-instances' of bad faith in the classroom. Given the ubiquity of bad faith in society more broadly, it is also important for us to consider it at an institutional level. In fact, institutional and individual forms of bad faith are inseparable in many respects, and an analysis of this relationship allows us to more deeply investigate the location of responsibility.

Importantly, such classroom examples are not by no means exhaustive, nor should they be thought of as generalisations. Neither are they accusatory. When Sartre speaks of responsibility, he is not thinking of the 'accountability' that we see in educational discourses today. But rather than remove the term 'responsibility' entirely from the language of education, my aim throughout this discussion is also to reimagine some of its more technicist conceptions in a more existentialist vein, something I will again return to in the final chapters of this thesis.

Role-Playing in the Classroom

The question of role-playing is central to the concept of bad faith. This is exemplified quite clearly with the waiter example, where a 'sincere' adoption of certain roles can lead us to deny the extent to which we can respond to our circumstances as free subjects. Role-playing, however, does not just happen in the workplace. Each social situation demands it, and with that, certain norms of speaking or ways of behaving appropriately in line with that context. Often we are *all* complicit in the perpetuation of roles – Sartre every time he buys a coffee, for example. All of this depends on what we consider bad faith to look like, and this is especially tricky when it comes to assigning it to other people, whose motivations for acting are not always clear to us. Moreover, bad faith is often something we do without full awareness, and in this sense, it permeates much of our lives, as Bonnett (1994, p. 102-103) so pertinently describes:

> We submerge ourselves in the world by living busily and unthinkingly according to the roles, stereotypes, expectations, with which 'they' provide us, and thus measure ourselves according to standards that are not truly our own. We lose ourselves in hobbies, pastimes, intellectual pursuits, and we make sure that we don't give ourselves the opportunity to think genuinely about our own unique individual existence. Instead we get comfortably carried along in what is essentially just 'gossip' or 'hearsay', and fashion in one form of another.

In the classroom, role-playing is also intimately tied to the ways in which we act, perhaps in an even more explicit sense than in other social situations where, arguably, we are freer to 'be ourselves'. On one level, this is because teachers and learners are often thought of as roles, and this implies certain recognisable ways of being in the classroom (e.g. the teacher stands in front of the class, the students sit behind desks in uniform). But these roles are complex, in part relying on societal demands that are not always clear. In teaching, there has been extensive research conducted that considers the roles that one adopts – caretakers, curriculum delivers, guardians of culture. Each of these has its own particular way of being in the classroom, but they are not clearly definable, nor are they clearly recognisable in a 'measurable' sense. Indeed, roles are contestable, since they are not only connected to the particular needs of society at the

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time, but also a particular definition of what education is for – both on an individual as well as institutional level (e.g. Biesta, 2014; Hoyle, 1969).

As argued in Part I, role profiles are often outlined in a more 'fixed' sense, particularly in policies that aim at measuring effective teaching. As we have seen, the discourses that define teaching in this way are often technicist in nature, delineated through what I have previously called 'profiles' of effective practice. Often, these profiles reduce the less measurable (or, indeed, *immeasurable*) components of teaching to pure 'subjectivism' as distinct from 'objective facts'. This, in turn, impacts on the ways in which we understand the very idea of the teacher. Indeed, considering the teacher purely in terms of this (technicist) 'role' involves considering their practice as distinct from their identity *as* teachers, or indeed, as *persons* acting on and interpreting the classroom situation in particular ways. As we saw in chapters 4 and 5, however, one's identity only becomes manifest in what they *do*. This 'produced' identity is related to but distinct from the fundamental pre-reflective mode of being that underpins it – the *lack of self* at our core that constitutes, for Sartre, our fundamental freedom. Where we conceive of our identities purely in terms of 'fixed roles', we are therefore denying this more fundamental freedom at our core, often in order to avoid the anxiety that comes with recognising it. This, of course, is the epitome of bad faith.

Within this technicist discourse, the role of the teacher is also connected to a particular conception of responsibility. Teachers are expected to adopt certain approaches in the classroom that are effective – the 'fulfilment' of pre-set objectives evidencing that the teacher has satisfied what it is she is thought to be accountable towards (e.g. student outcomes). The use of 'effectiveness profiles' give us straightforward benchmarks that allow us to clearly recognise 'good teaching'. This, in turn, comes to be how teachers recognise themselves, particularly in contexts where they are expected to 'account' for their practices using specific norms of communication. But to focus solely on this more technical understanding of teachers, learners, the lesson and indeed, the relationship between all of these, is to deny the ways in which teachers and learners are inevitably free subjects in the classroom, responding – and thus responsible - in a way that is *beyond* those functions (Brady, 2019a; 2020c).[6]

Thus, the more impoverished or 'technical' profiles that signify certain roles are significant in that they promote a 'fixed' sense of what being a teacher means. And yet, in teaching, in what sense can one's task be exhaustively pre-determined from the outset? Indeed, any attempt to 'represent' teaching in this sense will always fall short. This implies that the role of the teacher is inherently unstable or 'open', making both its conceptualisation and the extent to which it is adopted in light of this difficult. Teaching is fundamentally an *educational* activity, and since education itself is a contested term, definitions of the role itself are inevitably nebulous. As such, profiles are problematic not only because of *what* they represent, but also because they *claim to be able represent* teaching in the first place.

Yet, there *is* something recognisably 'teacherly' about a person, whether or not we are able to put an exact finger on this. Seeing someone as 'teacherly' does not necessarily involve reducing them to particular functions. Rather, what is implicit in our understanding and recognition of this are *representations* of teaching. Representations are never definitive in nature – they are inevitably tied to certain 'ideals' which, as we have seen above, can in some ways carve out a particular path for how one should act, whilst remaining at the same time open to uncertainty. Representations are also engaged with, often in implicit ways. They are

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[6] This is not to deny that, of course, there are some things in education and in the practice of teachers that *can* be thought of in a more 'functional' sense. The danger lies in seeing these functions as the *essence of being a teacher* – not only in the sense that there is much more to being a teacher than these prescribed functions, but because the teacher herself is a *human* in the room, and is therefore acting on the situation in ways that we explored in Chapter 5. This is not simply a discussion on the ethics of treating teachers as 'humans', but the fallacy of not accepting subjectivity when it comes to interpreting the classroom situation.

not clearly delineated in advance of teaching, but rather, are produced through the act of teaching itself. In other words, teachers *respond* to these representations - either in complete or partial adoption of them, garnered through an understanding of teaching that comes from one's own experience of 'effective' practice as a former student, through teacher education programmes, through television and film, and so on. The very understanding of this role relates to their fundamental projects as well as the various ways in which teaching has been represented to them. Understanding teaching in these terms may help to think about the teacher in a less essentialist way, and perhaps, offers a more existentialist understanding of what being a teacher involves.

Thus, the act of role-playing itself may not necessarily be problematic, but instead, how particular *kinds* of roles can be used to avoid thinking of ourselves or of particular individuals as being *beyond* them. If such roles too definitive, we are left with a fixed conception of teaching, reduced it to purely technical functions, for example. Although such roles profiles can be intrusive, this does not suggest that we are merely passive recipients of them. Rather, they are always engaged with – resisted, discarded, or perhaps something in between. Not only this, but these roles are not imposed by some impersonal 'they' (e.g. neoliberal discourses), since we are very much *a part* of this 'they' and thus in some ways impose these functions *on ourselves.* In this sense, our 'avoidance' of bad faith may relate to our accepting that we are always *in response* to these discourses, as well as the essentialist ideas about teaching that they seem to promote.

Teachers, for instance, are often very well aware of the problematic assumptions that are contained in policy discourses around effective practice (e.g. O'Brien, 2019). Their adoption of particular roles may very well be with the student in mind, where being in bad faith may, in some circumstances, seem to be the 'right' choice. Calling these role descriptions into question can also be risky, not only in terms of the more immediate effects on their students, but also in terms of the vulnerabilities that teachers may become exposed to as a result – being seen as ineffective, or as a troublemaker, perhaps (e.g. Santoro, 2017; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2019). They are also risky in deeper sense. For instance, if a teacher is to adopt a different 'language' in accounting for herself, to what extent would this be intelligible to others, particularly given the (technicist) coherency in the language we use to talk about teaching? These anxieties around the possibility of acting *against* the discourses is very much the reason why most of us, instead, choose to remain in bad faith.

Responding to the Situation

When considering the woman on the date with the man, or Ivich when she is kissed by Matthieu in the taxi, the bad faith demonstrated concerns the making of oneself into a passive object, objects that do not – and, indeed, *cannot* – take responsibility for responding to the situation. Various limitations in this example were explored – the idea that our capability to respond may be hindered (for example, the woman 'freezes' during the unwanted advances, not out of 'choice', but because of a certain biological facticity that limits the extent to which she *can* respond). We also explored how other related characters in these examples were also in bad faith – Mathieu, for instance, in failing to account for the freedom of Ivich, knowingly responding to the situation in a way that denies this.

When a learner becomes passive during a lesson, to what extent are they failing to respond to the situation in which they find themselves? And to what extent, therefore, might they be in bad faith? A passive student is not always the result of an 'ineffective' teacher (despite what profiles of effective practice might suggest), but often because the very idea of being in school is not something they would choose themselves, or because they (perhaps rightly so) have other priorities in mind. School, however, is an unavoidable situation that most

of us experience.[7] But, as we have seen, rather than actively responding to certain situations, some of us may adopt a more passive attitude.[8] And whilst passivity is often characterised as the *absence* of choice, it in fact represents the act of *not* choosing to respond to a situation. This, of course, is a choice. Indeed, in whichever situation we find ourselves in, we have no choice but to respond. As such, we are inherently responsible in some respect.

What about those students who decide to be disruptive in some way? Does this more visibly 'active' response to the situation of schooling represent something more 'authentic'? Indeed, a disruptive student may very well be understood as acting upon their freedom - to call into question the unelected authority of the teacher and the school, for instance. In one sense, the student may be acting on their freedom in order to expose the hypocrisy of what is going on, and as such, are acting in accordance with their fundamental values. Of course, they may do this for less noble reasons - with little regard for the freedom of others in the classroom, for instance. In this sense, the disruptive student may be seen as similar to Mathieu – as someone who knowingly curtails the freedom of others, and thus also fails to respond to particular situations where this freedom exists.[9] Or perhaps this disruptive student is acting in such a way as to remain popular with others – engaging in a kind of 'counter-hearsay' (Bonnett, 1994, p. 104) or merely adopting the 'role' of disruptive student (e.g. the 'class clown') not as a way to challenge and respond to the situation, but to live up to certain expectations in accordance with particular profiles made available to them. The point is that the dualism of 'passive' and 'active' does not necessarily allow us to demonstrate whether or not someone is in bad faith – our interpretations of situations are always belated. A student who may appear to be 'active' might still be merely performing (like the overly attentive pupil discussed earlier). Equally, a passive student may appear to be so but is nevertheless responding to the situation in different ways (listening in full attention, or by actively making themselves passive as a kind of 'protest' as such).

In any case, bad faith is also a response. So although we may deceive ourselves into thinking that we are not acting, or that we are forced to act in a certain way based on our pre-defined roles, there is always a fundamental choice underpinning every situation, including the ways in which those very situations are brought to light. One may question the extent to which students or teachers should, and *can*, be held responsible for all situations. But as we have seen, responsibility here does not necessarily refer to our conventional understanding, particularly the kind we find in current educational discourses – e.g. the student as 'responsible' for their learning, and therefore 'accountable' for the grades they receive. Responsibility here relates to the ways in which a person *responds* to the facticity of their situation. But, equally, it is not only the individual that may be in bad faith. In fact, perhaps in adopting one form of bad faith (e.g. disrupting the class because the student wishes to align themselves with a fixed role), a deeper sense of bad faith is exposed as a result (e.g. the problematic expectations in relation to a fixed understanding of what being a student entails). The latter example represents institutional forms of bad faith, something I will now endeavour to explore.

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[7] Of course, one might skip school, provided they are willing to accept responsibility for what happens if they do. But this is only a temporary measure, and still does not 'overthrow' the facticity of schooling.

[8] Similar to the limitations discussed in previous examples, however, this 'choosing a passive attitude' is just one example of what might be going on. It is much more difficult to say that a student who arrives to school on an empty stomach and is unable to concentrate is in bad faith. Bad faith must therefore be understood with due consideration into the particularities of the situation in which it arises.

[9] The discussion here is not primarily concerned with the ethics in regard to the freedom of others. Rather, the freedom of others is part of the situation that we are thrown into – it is, in some ways, a facticity (although not in the same way as brute existence). A failure to acknowledge the other's freedom is also a failure to properly understand the facticity of the situation, which is another form of bad faith.

Individual and Institutional Bad Faith

So far, we have discussed the extent to which role-playing can be problematic in that it can 'essentialise' what it means to be a teacher or a student, and therefore deny the extent to which both teachers and students are *more* than what these roles define. Important to our discussion here is in thinking about how those roles are described at an institutional level. In the case of education, bad faith may be perpetuated not only by the individual's subscription to certain role profiles, but by the content of those role profiles themselves. Although teachers are always responding to the situation in which they find themselves, that situation is inevitably framed by the nature and direction of responses as an institutional level. And given that, as we have seen, the stakes involved in acting as a free subject means that, more often than not, we choose to remain in bad faith, the way in which these roles are applied and understood in the context of teaching is therefore important.

As we have seen in Part I, one concern with self-evaluation is that it might become a form of self-inspection, where the teacher is merely forced to emulate the role of the inspector (MacBeath, 2006). This can result in a more obvious form of bad faith, where teachers are not only described in an essentialist way but are, in fact, 'forced' to see and evaluate *themselves* in this same way. In the Irish context, however, the balanced nature of inspection practices has ultimately been welcomed as a positive alternative to the 'self-inspection' model elsewhere (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; 2012). In fact, the literature on self-evaluation in Ireland actively attempts to neutralise anxieties in relation to this, and this perhaps partly why it has been positively received.

But the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines* nevertheless instruct teachers in adopting certain role profiles. As we have seen, these are not merely standards against which teachers and schools evaluate themselves, but also provide 'a language for discussing what is working well and what needs to be improved' (DES, 2016a, p. 22). One only needs to consider the range of managerialist terms that are used throughout ('outcomes', '(highly) effective practice', 'measurable improvement'), terms that assume an essentialist and fixed conception of the teacher and the learning process as a whole. The ways in which those guidelines might be seen to represent bad faith then also comes to be how the teacher defines herself. And by following the directives indicated in the frameworks for self-evaluation, the possibilities of what *can* be discussed is also constrained along these lines. Thus, whilst on paper self-evaluation appears to be sensitive to varying voices within the school community, the language that it initiates teachers into means that the very idea of what being a teacher entails is *already* moulded, and so too the possible ways in which we might discuss or account for this.

This 'language of evaluation' - produced at an institutional level and imposed on the individual teacher - is done in a way that assuages certain anxieties. But this is not the kind of anxiety that Sartre accounts for, as that which inevitably arises when one confronts one's fundamental freedom and responsibility. Rather, it is an anxiety of performativity, one that arises from concerns over the extent to which one might *appear* to be an (in)effective teacher (Brady, 2019a). Lyotard (1984) relates performativity to a kind of 'terror', where anxiety of this kind can lead to a neurotic obsession with making sure that the 'outputs' (what is visible and measurable in a classroom) are executed in a technically perfect way. Ironically, it is an anxiety that arises from being in bad faith, as distinct from the (necessary) anxiety that, in *choosing* to be in bad faith, one attempts to suppress.

And yet, even if those role profiles are premised on an institutionalised form of bad faith, one inevitably responds to these profiles in the classroom. The quasi-tragic element of all of this is that both teachers and students may perpetuate institutional bad faith – without fully realising it, perhaps – by adopting those profiles in their understanding of themselves and others in the classroom. Perhaps, then, a disruption of sorts is necessary – a new way in which to account for these practices that brings institutional bad faith to the fore, such that these

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impoverished ways of thinking about teaching can be not only acknowledged but (continually) struggled against. Importantly, the teacher and the students are not *only* responding to these role profiles, however, nor are they *only* responding to the situation in which they find themselves. They are also responding to *each other*. In order to understand this, an account of the Other is necessary, to which we will now turn.

7

Being for the Other

7.1 From Being an Individual to Being for the Other

In previous chapters, we have touched upon the ways we are inescapably a consciousness before others. In Chapter 4, we considered the role of the Other in the production of our 'selves'. In Chapter 5, the Other is understood as an intimate part of the situation in which my freedom is enacted, and in which I also make myself intelligible. In Chapter 6, we began to see how our attempts to evade responsibility for ourselves through bad faith is often with the Other in mind. Sartre understands that the Other is a primitive 'ontological structure' in its own terms. But he does not set out to 'prove' that the Other exists in this way, as previous philosophers have done. Rather, Sartre focus is primarily on the individual's lived experience with others.

The idea of 'shame' is a central example throughout *Being and Nothingness* as well as Sartre's literary works, and it is a good starting point to think about the ways in which we experience our existence with others. As Catalano (1985, p. 152) puts it, shame 'reveals that we immediately view ourselves as before the "other"'. For example, when I make 'a clumsy or awkward gesture… [it] sticks to me; I neither judge it nor blame it; I simply live it' (Sartre, 2018, p. 308). This indicates that what Sartre calls *being-for-the-other* is an intimate part of my individual lived experience. When the Other is present in a shameful situation, I am forced to think of myself as an object, and before them I 'erupt' as a self that can be studied and judged. This self is not some 'bad portrait of myself' (Sartre, 2018, p. 308), something I can dismiss as distorted or false. Rather, I recognise that *I am as the Other sees me* – even if I do not like what I see, and even if the way in which the Other views me is unfounded. All of this happens pre-reflectively, and when we are caught in a shameful act, shame arrives as an 'immediate shudder that runs through me from head to toe, without any discursive preparation'.

Shame demonstrates that our existence in the world is therefore also defined by the Other in ways over which we have no control. Unlike bad faith, it cannot be avoided simply by owning up to the responsibility we have for ourselves. But what if we are to deny the existence of the Other, or to care less about what they think? Sartre examines this question by first considering the positions he rejects.

The Reef of Solipsism

According to Sartre, certain philosophical traditions have endorsed an impoverished view of the Other. Initially, he focuses his critique on realism and idealism. These traditions appear to be opposites, but when analysed in terms of their accounts of the Other, they are in fact mutually reinforcing. In attempting to maintain their positions as distinct, both seep into a kind of solipsism, where the very existence of others is open to question. Sartre then turns to three thinkers who have been influential in his own thought – Husserl, Hegel, and Heidegger. He outlines how each offer an improved account of the Other, but that problems remain. Importantly, what Sartre offers here is a caricature of each position. In fact, the only thinker who *could* defend himself against his critique – Heidegger – openly accused Sartre of

misunderstanding his ideas (See, for example, Blakewell, 2016; Chernilo, 2017). What is important here is to think about how these critiques have led to the formulation of Sartre's own position, even if they are, in fact, misguided or erroneous to some degree.

Realism vs. Idealism
Briefly speaking, realists posit the existence of the Other in terms of their bodily presence. By analysing the other's bodily behaviour – 'reading' their emotions, for example - I assume that this 'other' is conscious like me. And yet, what if the Other is a machine who merely mimics the emotions of conscious beings? The realist thus relies on conjecture in that they are only able to say that it is *probable* that the other exists, and solipsism therefore remains a possibility. This account also resorts to a kind of idealism in *inferring* the existence of the Other as a conscious being – 'a mere representation… whose existence is measured by the knowledge that we have it' (Sartre, 2018, p. 311). Realism paradoxically becomes the very thing it sets out to refute.

Idealists fare no better. Kant's aim, according to Sartre, is to posit a universality amongst humankind – a 'subjectivity' that differentiates humans from other animals. When I encounter another, they appear to me as 'the presence of structured forms - such as facial and other expressions, actions and ways of behaving' (Sartre, 2018, p. 313), forms that allow me to recognise them as 'humans like me'. But even though I realise that there are certain commonalities between me and the Other, I know that they can never be fully understood because their internal life is not something I am privy to. We therefore must *assume* that the Other exists without knowing this for a fact, and yet this again means that solipsism is possible.

For Sartre, the Other cannot be deduced in any *a priori* sense. Rather, they are first encountered, and only then do we reflect on what this means. Ultimately, for Sartre (2018, p. 322) both of realism and idealism posit a separation between me and the Other as 'two separate substances' (e.g. flesh-and-blood bodies). But for Sartre, this is not quite right. Rather, the Other is identified *as* other insofar as it is a self which is not me. Therefore, our relationship is one of negation rather than affirmation. The Other and I are not simply separated as 'bodies' but by an *absence of relation* between us in the first place, a concrete nothingness that arises in consciousness in an immediate sense. In other words, my experience of the Other is fundamentally pre-reflective.

Husserl
According to Sartre, Husserl shows that the Other is present in consciousness as a 'permanent condition of its unity and… richness' (Sartre, 2018, p. 233). For instance, the Other offers a 'layer of constitutive meaning' in relation to the brute existence I encounter, and without this intersubjectivity, the world itself would not appear to me as meaningful in the way that it does. When we think of a chair, for example, we know it to be *objectively* so because of a social agreement that we have with others (e.g. how it is used). Through phenomenological reduction, Husserl attempts to also show that the Other is not simply an object in the world, but is, in fact, necessary for the very constitution of the world itself.

Sartre (2018, p. 323) largely agrees with this, and yet argues that Husserl's method still results in a conjecture about the Other's existence, where the Other is reduced to a 'supplementary category of meaning' that provides objectivity in the world. As such, Husserl's concern is not with the *being* of the Other, but with *knowledge* we might have of them. But what are the implications of this? Simplistically put, in providing an epistemological rather than ontological account of the Other, Husserl also fails to escape the solipsistic position. Indeed, by relying solely on my knowledge of the Other, I must also admit the possibility of *never* knowing the Other, and that I may therefore be the only person that exists!

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Hegel

Hegel's (1998) account of the Other is most salient in the master-slave dialectic, as explored in his seminal text, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In this, he shows us that the Other is not simply necessary in order to establish objectivity in the world but is also inescapable in my own self-understanding. This self-understanding comes from a (mutual) process of exclusion - the Slave is defined as such because he is *not* the Master, and likewise, the Master is defined as *not being* the Slave. For this reason, the 'path of internality passes through the other' (Sartre, 2018, p. 326). But this is where the so-called 'problem' of the Other arises in Hegel's account. Since the Other is essential for my own self-consciousness, my existence therefore relies on seeing myself as an object for them. Indeed, the Master can only understand himself by virtue of being recognised as Master by the slave. He therefore not only becomes as the other sees him, but is also entirely dependent on this other for his own existence. Indeed, he has become paradoxically enslaved to the recognition from the slave[1], and both characters in the dialectic are therefore ensnared within a struggle for recognition.[2]

According to Sartre, the ontological problem of the Other in Hegel's account is that it also formulates a separation of two subjects on the basis of knowledge, where the Master tries to establish the 'truth' of his own existence by acknowledging the ways in which he is recognised by the Slave. Although this 'self-certitude' relies on a measure of being, it nevertheless rests on an epistemological question about *knowing* oneself through the other. It does not tell us how it is that we *experience* the world with others in a concrete sense. For Sartre, self-consciousness cannot be defined in terms of knowledge, since it is itself embedded in the very questions it raises about its own existence – i.e. it exists *prior* to those questions being raised in the first place.[3] As we have already explored, this process of production radically modifies consciousness, and thus what is grasped in knowledge is the self in the world, and not the pre-reflective consciousness that underpins this.

Heidegger

Heidegger is perhaps most influential for Sartre's account of the Other (Catalano, 1985). A key concept in Heidegger's discussion of the Other is *Mitsein*, usually translated as 'being-with-(others)'. *Mitsein* implies that the encounter with the Other is already revealed in my being-in-the-world, as part of 'my own pre-ontological understanding of myself' (Sartre, 2018, p. 337). The shift from *being-for* in Hegel to *being-with* in Heidegger changes how we conceive of the Other. Where *being-for* focuses on the mutual recognition of two separate consciousnesses in confrontation with one another, *being-with* points to an 'ontological solidarity', a sense of collectiveness that is absent from the other accounts thus far. Sartre likens this collective force to a crew of rowers. These rowers work in a synchronised fashion, with a common rhythm moving towards a common goal on the horizon of a common world. In this case, the Other is not bound to me as an instrument necessary for the maintenance or knowledge of my own existence, but is a subject that 'haunts' the world that I respond to. According to Sartre, Heidegger understands that human reality consists in a total, synthetic unity of *being-in-the-world*, where relations I have with others can be realised in either authentic or inauthentic ways. An authentic life, for instance, takes into account the contingency of our birth, the finitude of

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[1] This is not formed on the basis on equal recognition, however. Rather, '[t]he value of the other's recognition of me depends on the value of the recognition by me of the Other.' (Sartre, 2018, p. 327). This relates to Taylor's (1989; 1991) conception of 'significant others'. Indeed, the Master *must* see the Slave as a subject capable of conferring recognition, since without his subjectivity, he could not be recognised as the Master.

[2] Hegel's account eventually leads to a sublation of the thesis and antithesis into the 'Whole', where the struggle is 'resolved'. This is something that Sartre takes issue with, since he takes the view that this struggle is perpetual.

[3] In Hegel's dialectics, a 'third person' is necessary in order to triangulate the contrary positions. Sartre, however, does not believe that such a 'third person' can exist without becoming enmeshed in the relation itself.

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our lives, and the certainty of our death, each of which are commonalities that we share with others. An inauthentic life involves seeing others purely as instrumental for my own self-realisation. This also reduces the Other to an anonymous, impersonal 'they', which therefore fails to fully account for the plurality of consciousnesses.

Whilst Sartre agrees with most of this, he sees some unresolved issues with Heidegger's account. For one, it has not moved on from the Kantian idea of the (abstract) subject, since Heidegger implies a 'universal consciousness' that does not enable us to talk about being in any concrete or particular sense. This also implies that the relation can be understood in an *a priori* sense. But since I am embedded in this very relation itself, my knowing that the Other exists would require a third person to triangulate the two viewpoints, something that Sartre ultimately rejects. Despite this, Sartre (2018, p. 344) argues that a new insight might be garnered from Heidegger:

> …[that] the nature of the Other's existence is that of a contingent and irreducible fact. We *encounter* the Other; we do not constitute him… the necessity of the Other's existence must, if it exists, be a 'contingent necessity', i.e. of just that type of *factual necessity* with which the *cogito* impresses itself on us.

It is on this basis that Sartre formulates his own idea of a concrete realisation of the Other.

7.2 The Look of the Other

Sartre is not really concerned with establishing *that* the Other exists, since regardless of this, we nevertheless experience their presence in a concrete way, as something that affects both my awareness of the world and of myself. In order to demonstrate this, he asks us to imagine that we are in a public park, with lawns and benches and other objects readily associated with the scene. A man enters, and at first, I am indifferent to his presence. He might be an object for all I know, a being without consciousness. Gradually, however, I begin to realise that things are bound to him in the same way that they are for me, that his relation to other objects is external to me, slowly leading to a disintegration of *my* world. All of the objects in the park become 'qualified' by him - the grass is green according to *him*, a greenness that I cannot see in the same way as he does, colours that are therefore 'stolen' from me and from my world. Indeed, the world is 'brought to light' in a way that I cannot control. Suddenly, the man looks at me. In recognising his subjectivity, I become aware of the fact that I am *being seen*, and my own objectivity is thus established. This 'being seen' can only be understood in terms of my relation with the Other, and since I *always* exist in the world with others, I am therefore permanently exposed to the possibility of being seen. Ultimately, it is because of this relation that I am (partly) defined in the world.

The Other and the Production of the Self

What affects me is not the physiology of the look - the 'eyes' that are watching me, for instance. Of course, the eye serves as a necessary object that supports the existence of the look. But when I focus on someone's eyes, I am no longer experiencing the sensation of being watched. Conversely, when I experience being looked at, this physiology fades into the background. The look itself is thus immaterial, a pure revelation of the relation between me and the Other upon which the meaning of the world and of myself in it depends. Indeed, it takes merely the *possibility* of being seen in order to experience this - a feeling of exposure towards the Other:

> What I grasp immediately when I hear the branches breaking behind me is not that *someone is there*, but that I am vulnerable, that I have a body that can be hurt, that I am occupying a place and that I cannot in any circumstance escape…in short, that I *am seen.* (Sartre, 2018, p. 355)

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Imagine I am looking through a keyhole, believing that I am alone. In this moment, consciousness remains on a pre-reflective level, where I am so absorbed in the task at hand that I fail to grasp myself as a 'self' present at the scene. Suddenly, I hear footsteps and my entire being is affected. I experience what Sartre calls the 'irruption of the self' (Sartre, 2003, p. 260). I immediately suspect the presence of the Other and become suddenly conscious of myself as 'the person… *as an object for* [them]' (Sartre, 2018, p. 357). I realise that I now have a foundation outside of me, and there is an immediate and lived '*recognition* that I really *am* this object that is looked at and judged by the Other' (Sartre, 2018, p. 358). But it is not only *me* that is radically modified in this relation. I am no longer able to see the Other as an object insofar as I immediately recognise their subjectivity.

This produced self forces us to recognise that we are as the Other sees us. But given that this comes about through the Other whom I cannot know, such recognition is by nature indeterminate and uncertain. As we have seen in Chapter 5, our existence with the Other acts as a limitation on our freedom, where they 'haunt' my being like a shadow:

> …projected on to some moving and unpredictable material, such that no system of cross-references could allow us to calculate the distortions resulting from these movements. And yet it really is a question of *my* being, and not my being's image. It is a question of my being as it is inscribed in and through the Other's freedom (Sartre, 2018, p. 359).

This in some ways 'proves' the existence of Others, since in being recognised by them, I am in turn recognise a consciousness that is not simply a guarantee of objectivity in the world, but part of my lived experience. In fact, I cannot be *what I am* without the look of the Other. But in being what I am, I am therefore stripped of my own transcendence – I become an object that I have no way of accessing or controlling. Perhaps there are ways that I can 'hide' from the Other when I hear footsteps. But even these possibilities remain open to modification by the Other, evidenced by my hypervigilance in that situation, where 'the Other may… [unmask] me, identifying me and apprehending me' (Sartre, 2018, p. 362). Indeed, I am perpetually at risk from the look of the Other, and even if I *do* feel that I can exert some control over the situation, there are all sorts of unforeseen possibilities that the Other can enact.

Thus, through the Other, I irredeemably live my experience as an objectified and embodied being in the world. In fact, I cannot be an object except through the mediation of another's freedom. When I think of myself as an object of study through some dissociative form of self-reflection, for instance, it is through the eyes of the Other. Nevertheless, this 'me-as-object' should not be understood in a completely fixed sense, as an *ultimate* limitation to my freedom as a subjective being. Sartre says, the Other 'teaches me who I am' (Sartre, 2018, p. 374) as situated in the world, but they do not say anything about what I *could* be, or what I am in a fundamental sense - an existence that precedes an essence.

Absence and Presence
But what if we are, in fact, not actually being watched? What if the Other is not present? More pertinently, why is it that we still feel ashamed even if they are not there? Sartre (2018, p. 377) refers to this as a kind of 'false shame' – a shame before nobody that, in fact, reveals an even purer notion of my *being-for-the-other*:

> I do not cease to *undergo* my being-for-the-other; my possibilities do not cease to 'die', nor do the distances stop unfolding towards me from… that dark corner where a human presence 'might' be hiding. Better still, if I start at the slightest sound, if each creak announces a look to me, this is because I am already in the state of being-looked-at.

Even if I may mistaken about the physical presence of the Other, I still remain hypervigilant, particularly in an act that I would feel embarrassed by if I were caught. This indicates that the

look of the Other is present everywhere, *even in absence*. Sartre explores the dichotomy of absence and presence elsewhere in *Being and Nothingness*, but it is perhaps most acute in his discussion here. In Chapter 5, we explored how our experience of absence is framed by what *should* be present – I feel Pierre's absence from the café when I am expecting him to be there. But the perception of presence and absence also relies on a collective objectivity that can only come about through the co-existence with other human realities. Indeed, Pierre's absence is only meaningful insofar as *others* that are bound to him (me) expect his presence.

Importantly, it is without distance that we relate to others. Indeed, we are not only situated in relation to others by locality, but also by other 'facts' – the fact that I am European in relation to non-Europeans, bourgeois in relation to workers, young in relation to old. These all constitute what Sartre calls the 'original presence' of the Other, which grounds our relations with other people as well as our own situatedness in the world. And since we will always within the 'unnumbered reality' (Sartre, 2003, p. 281) of *being-for-the-other*, we will always in some sense be defined through the various ways in which we are situated in relation to them.

But what happens when, re-asserting my subjectivity, I not only acknowledge the presence of the Other, but *look back* at them? In this instance, the omnipresent and pre-numerical Other is 'isolated within a multiplicity' (Sartre, 2018, p. 382). And the moment when I begin to see them as individuals, the 'look' itself disintegrates. Sartre (2018, p. 383) gives this example:

> …if we find ourselves appearing 'in public' in order to perform a role or to give a lecture, we do not lose sight of the fact that we are looked at, and we… perform *in the presence* of the look… For as long as we are speaking, and attending only to the ideas that we want to develop, the Other's presence remains undifferentiated. It would be a mistake to unify it under the categories '*the class*', '*the audience*'…those are images that we might use later to express our experience and largely to betray it. But neither do we grasp a plural look. Rather, we find ourselves dealing with an intangible, fleeting and omnipresent reality… If on the contrary, I want to check that my idea has been clearly understood, and if I look in my turn at the audience, I will suddenly see *some* heads and *some* eyes appearing. In becoming objectified, the pre-numerical reality… immediately disintegrates.

The omnipresence of the look is thereby sustained as pre-numerical by the fact that it cannot be apprehended as an object without disintegrating into a plurality. This, in turn, seems to be a necessary step, not only in asserting my *own* subjectivity (by looking back), but also by recognising the plurality of consciousnesses before me as a collection of individual subjectivities. Looking back, for Sartre, therefore allows for a more 'authentic' relationship with the Other, since it involves recognising them – and myself - as individual beings. Nevertheless, in looking back, we engage in a perpetual struggle to be recognised as a subject by the Other (who, in turn, is struggling to be recognised as a subject by *me*), and for Sartre, it is this 'conflictual' aspect that ultimately defines our relationship with the Other in the world.

Freedom and Perpetual Negation
What might all of this indicate for my own self-understanding? There is, for Sartre, an ontological distinction between *being-for-the-other* and *being-for-itself*, a distinction that relates to the differences between internal and external negation. Internal negation refers to *being-for-itself*, in terms of how one realises their free consciousness as inherently bound to that which it is not (i.e. *being-in-itself*). In relation to *being-for-the-other*, I also negate the Other since without this I cannot constitute myself as 'me' and the Other as 'other'. This negation, however, is external in nature. Whilst internal negation is not reciprocal (since brute existence purely an 'indifferent externality' that cannot 'look back' (Sartre, 2018, p. 386)), negation of the Other is mutual. In refusing to be an object for the Other (refusing the characteristics he 'fixes' to me, for instance), I separate myself from them. But in doing so, I am recognising their subjectivity, and that I am a *self-for-others*. Since this struggle is

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perpetual, the Other is the only thing that can limit me, and that can strip me of my transcendence. They reveal to me the instability of my selfhood, and the ways in which I am embodied in the world through the mediation of others over which I have no control. I nevertheless respond to this, however, by engaging with the very struggle itself. And thus *being-for-the-other* is not a refutation of my fundamental freedom, but part of its manifestation.

7.3 Fear, Shame, Pride: Authentic Responses to the Other?

Turning to familiar examples, Sartre attempts to tentatively introduce authentic and inauthentic responses to the Other in light of this mutual struggle for recognition. He examines this question through three kinds of responses – fear, shame, and pride – giving each its own Sartrian 'twist'. The authentic understanding of fear, for example, comes about through realising that I am produced as an object in the world by the Other. This fear can be overcome in recognising that this produced self is not essential, however – it can be resisted or refused, or I can objectify the Other in such a way that leaves them unable to objectify me. Yet, since this act of surpassing the Other is reciprocal, fear is thus experienced as a kind of vertigo – an immediate uneasiness that does not result from reflections on the dangers of the situation, but arises in consciousness as a spontaneous realisation that *I am* as others see me.

A closely related example is shame, which Sartre also sees as an authentic realisation of *being-for-the-other*. Like fear, shame comes about in the sense that I am produced as an object for the Other, also '*recognizing* myself in that degraded, dependent and fixed being' (Sartre, 2018, p. 392). This recognition of myself implies that, at some level, I *need* the mediation of the Other in order to be who I am. But shame can also be resisted to some degree. We can, for example, assert our right to be free by confronting the Other (detailed in different examples below), or perhaps through a performance of sorts, even if that leads us into bad faith. In any case, in shame, I have no choice *but* to respond in some way.

Pride, on the other hand, relies on a resignation of my subjectivity, and is therefore inauthentic. I may say, for example, that I am *this* way because I am proud of it. Indeed, our relations with others can bring us a sense of stability in this way (Van der Wielen, 2014), where I commit myself to an essentialist identity that therefore denies the extent to which I am free. Pride is thus an example of bad faith. It might be interesting to analyse this in relation to the more modern manifestations of pride – the re-appropriation of racist or sexist words as a form of empowerment for marginalised groups, or indeed, the deliberate forms of pride that are exhibited in order to counteract what was once considered shameful acts.[4] Perhaps these are forms of 'weak' bad faith, since in some way, they involve the concretisation of particular identity markers in order to achieve wider and, perhaps, more important goals. De Beauvoir's (2010) *The Second Sex* also speaks of the necessity of concretising identities in terms of embodied female experiences in order to address wider issues of sexism. Pride thus need not involve a blind acceptance of the objectified identity as a defining feature of 'who I am', but rather a temporary measure to address concrete inequalities. The political dimensions and power relations involved in our relation with others is not something Sartre spends much time on in *Being and Nothingness*, and perhaps deeper consideration on these issues raise certain limitations in his thought. Again, it is worth reiterating that his purpose at this stage is *not* to say what 'right' or 'wrong' relations[5] look like, but to purely describe how it is that we experience our existence with others.

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[4] I am thinking here of the Gay Pride, or the re-appropriation of certain offensive terms such as 'slut'.

[5] Philosophers, such as Charles Taylor (1991), point out that 'authenticity' *is* about 'right' or 'wrong' relations. Thus, Sartre's attempts to remain purely ontological in his descriptions of authenticity are perhaps not so convincing.

7.4 The Body

Before turning to the wider implications of Sartre's account of the Other, it is important to also recognise that we as individuals exist in the world in *embodied* ways, and it is often on the basis of this that we are recognised by the Other. However, my relationship with the Other (as an 'embodied being') is not the same as my relationship with objects. Fundamentally, my relation to the Other is one of *engagement*.[6] But in order to recognise the Other as such, we need first to accept that they are *more* than the ways in which they are embodied before me, and that they can only be indirectly understood through immediate and lived experiences.

This might imply that humans consist of an 'inner' consciousness and an 'outer' body. But Sartre does not wish to suggest that consciousness merely 'surveys' the world from the inside. Rather, this world exists because of a perspective we have that directly relates to how we are concretely embodied.[7] Indeed, the body is the very context in which consciousness projects itself onto the world. But my body also exists *for others*. It is not that the Other has 'access' to our being through our bodies, but rather, their objectification of our bodies *reveals* our subjectivity (and vice versa), since it reveals that another has a particular point of view distinct from my own. At the same time, *because* of my body, I may be interpreted by the Other in ways over which I have no control. As such, there is a certain 'unknowingness' about ourselves that comes from our existence with others – an exposure as well as an alienation from our own body, now an exterior 'thing' analysed and judged by a multiplicity of others in ways over which we have no control.

In exploring this further, Sartre outlines three concrete attitudes in our relationship with others. I will focus only on some of these, however, since these are the ones that most saliently describe lived complexities with educational import. It is worth noting that each account appears to be quite cynical, and perhaps leads to the presumption that it is better to be an individual untethered to the Other in any way. But I don't think this is quite what Sartre was getting at. Indeed, the vulnerability and exposure that we experience in relation to others is crucial in many ways, as I will attempt to show at a later point with reference to the educational context.

7.5 The Other in Language and in Death

Sartre first explores 'attitudes' that refer to our failed attempts at maintaining both the subjectivity of others and of myself. Importantly, we should not think of this 'failure' in the negative sense since it represents the very nature of our own consciousness, and our own fundamental freedom as a result. I will focus here on the example of language.

When we wish to express our*selves*, we aim to make ourselves intelligible to the Other. But this implies that, through our use of language, I 'learn' the Other's objectification of myself *for* myself, and thus incorporate certain ways of being intelligible that are not of my own making. And yet, since this necessarily involves the 'use' of the Other to recognise me as an object, I am therefore treating the Other as an instrument for my own recognition. Thus, I am inescapably asserting on my own subjectivity. For Sartre, putting oneself in words does not therefore mean that we are denying our own freedom and responsibility, and this in itself remains an inescapable component of being a conscious being.

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[6] Saying that one is engaged to a person is different than how we might use the term in relation to objects (e.g. I am engaged to Pierre vs. the knife is engaged in the wound). In one instance, the object is a passive instrument, but in the other sense, I am expressing and performing a certain commitment to a person that I know to be a subject.

[7] This again relates to Sartre's attempts to overcome Cartesian dualism. He provides a lengthy description of the senses in order to show that the relations of our different bodies to brute existence yield different experiences. A blind person's entire world appears in a completely different way than those who experience it as sighted, for example. If we were gaseous rather than 'solid' beings, the world itself would appear very differently.

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Sartre also accepts that there are less confrontational aspects of being with Others. Indeed, there is a sense in which we cooperate with others, referring to what Sartre calls the 'we-relation'.[8] This 'we-relation' looks to particular artefacts (e.g. language) in the world that points to the existence of others. It is a relation that does not affect our own objectivity *nor* subjectivity, since these complex sets of artefacts that are not created by us as individuals can, in fact, be used in order to transcend our own possibilities, and to therefore involve ourselves in purposes that also encapsulate the freedom of others. As we have seen in Chapter 5, whatever I put into language reflects my fundamental values, and yet, language itself also reveals my existence with Others. The artefacts of language may be impersonal, but they can nevertheless be utilised in order to work towards my fundamental project, a project that therefore involves communicating with the Other in some way. Thus, whereas Sartre's discussion of the Other is mainly defined in terms of conflict, this we-relation indicates the necessity of our existence with others in order to act on the world. I will examine this further in reference to the educational context towards the end of the chapter, but also in Part III.

Being for the Other in Death: Huis Clos

What happens, however, when we are in a situation where we are concretised by others and are unable to respond? This is explored in Sartre's play, *Huis Clos*[9], where he tells the story of three characters – Garcin, Estelle, and Inez - who have found themselves in hell. Hell (as a physical location) is, surprisingly, a room with Second Empire furniture. For the characters in the play, this is at first a relief. Gradually, it becomes clear that hell is more than just this physical space, however, but the very fact that these three characters will have to exist with one another for eternity. Garcin, the first to arrive, is informed that they will never be able to sleep in hell, or even blink, something he describes as 'a life without a break' (Sartre, 1989, pp. 183-184). There are no mirrors in the room, only a brass mantlepiece that reflects a distorted image of each character. In this sense, they can never see themselves but only by each other.

As the play progresses, each character beings to reveal the reasons why they have ended up in hell. In typically Sartrian fashion, these examples are quite melodramatic and shocking. Garcin deserted the army during the war. Inez taunted her lover about her recently deceased husband, resulting in the lover killing them both in a murder-suicide. Estelle – bubbly and convivial at first – slowly reveals how she had murdered her own baby. Their rationalisations are all retrospective, changing considerably throughout as the conflict between the characters evolves. Despite being jovial and polite towards one another in the beginning, the three begin to act as mutual tormentors - simply by virtue of the fact that they are always *there*. Famously, Garcin announces at the end of the play that 'Hell… is other people!' (Sartre, 1989, p. 233). Hell is not the 'material' objects in the room – the sparse furniture, the brass mantlepiece and the distorting images it creates, the doors, the 'windows' looking back on life on earth - these

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[8] As opposed to the 'us-relation' proposed by Heidegger's Mitsein, which Sartre argues is a is a reflected idea produced *after* our more fundamental, pre-reflective encounters with others. In rather obscure terms, Sartre talks about how we experience the 'us' as a 'detotalised totality' – a totality that can never be fully experienced once I am a conscious being that is embedded within that totality itself. In other words, the 'us' comes about via an abstraction of our relationship with others – a 'third person' who can view this relation from the outside. If I am in conflict with a person, a third person who acts as a witness to that conflict would, in fact, be able to 'objectify' it – to study and analyse it in less involved way. Sartre considers class consciousness here as an example of such a conflict, where the third person might be a Marxist analyst, or a governmental official who 'assigns' individuals to two different class categories, something one is unable to do if they are embedded in the relationship that defines these categories in the first place.

[9] A popular play written by Sartre is 1944, sometimes translated as either 'No Exit' or 'In Camera'. Interestingly, 'In Camera' is a legal term, coming from the Latin for 'in chambers', and refers to a 'hearing or discussions with the judge in the privacy of his chambers', or where spectators and/or jurors have been excluded from the court-room.

material objects merely frame the condition of being seen by the other (e.g. the walls indicate the inescapability of the situation). Through the look, each character becomes objectified with recognisable traits and dispositions based on past actions and present justifications, all of which result in the formation of a concrete identity about who they are. Their admitted complicity in their sins on earth means that they are gradually exposed not only to one another, but also to themselves. Of course, there is no measure of accuracy in how they account for themselves, no way of telling which 'version' of the story is correct. This is because no 'version' exists prior to being offered in language. But the fact that each character struggles to justify their actions represents the *affectivity* of being seen – one would be arguably more dismissive of an identity that they did not identify in themselves. And whilst in life it may have been possible to respond to this concretization, in death, this is no longer the case.

Towards the end of the play, Garcin finds a way to escape. But he decides against this, knowing that such an escape will not change how the other characters *see* him. Instead, he remains within the room, with the explicit aim of convincing the others that he is not the coward they think he is. It appears that Garcin – and each of us in our own way – craves the recognition from others in order that we may recognise ourselves in the same way, *even* from those that we dislike. Similarly, Inez speaks of this in relation to the others in the room, demonstrating that the old trope which states that 'we should not care about what others think' is not really possible:

> To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I *feel* you there, down to my marrow. Your silence clamours in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out – but you can't help prevent your *being there…* Why, you've even stolen my face; you know it and I don't! (Sartre, 1989, p. 231).

In summary, then, our existence with others is immediate and is characterised by the perpetual failure to *be* a completely untethered, free subject. As such, our direct confrontation with the Other is a conflict – a continual struggle to be recognised as a subject whilst implicitly being aware that 'achieving' this would, in fact, lead to our objectification. And yet, perhaps there are other, less explicit, ways that we exist with others - certain practices we embody that suggest their existence, or where we incorporate some form of 'concretisation' necessary for us to communicate – and, indeed, to make sense of - our fundamental projects. Much of Sartre ideas here are both relevant and perhaps limited in the sphere of education, to which I will now turn.

7.6 The Self and the Other in the Educational Context

When we think of a teacher as 'being seen', we might think of inspection regimes, and the way that these regimes turn the teacher into an object of study and analysis. Because of the pervasiveness of audit culture in schools, the teacher is embedded in 'panoptic performativity' (Perryman, 2006) – they conduct themselves in accordance with norms and behaviours externally imposed, adopting a language or mannerisms in order to appear 'effective'. This performativity terrorises the soul (Ball, 2003; Lyotard, 1984), not only dictating how one should behave, but actively contributing to the internalisation of norms such that teachers need not be policed in any explicit sense. Performativity causes us to focus on what 'techniques' I can employ in the classroom in order to ensure that I am *seen* as effective by students, by inspectors, and also by this dissociated 'me' using evidence-based approaches to reflect on my own practices (Brady, 2019a).

But does the tyranny of performativity account for the nuances in practices, that even if there is an imposition on teachers from external bodies, they are nevertheless always responding to this in some way? Perhaps some teachers enjoy being told they are effective, and thus, they act in accordance with the regimes of truth because they *chose* to do so. Or perhaps

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some teachers are very much in agreement with what is laid out in the profiles of effectiveness. Not all teachers are in 'bad faith' should they follow the demarcated paths to effectiveness, subsuming themselves to the regimes of truth in neoliberal discourses, just as it is not *always* an example of 'bad faith' should one choose to be intelligible to (and thus limited by) the Other. Of course, there is an element of bad faith in the kinds of profiles or discourses themselves, and they certainly do not capture the uncanny feeling when walking into a classroom for the first time. They also do not capture the fact that, whilst much of these profiles direct one's practice, a *decision* is still made in adopting them or not, and *how* this is done in a concrete sense. Indeed, policies are not linearly implemented, but are engaged with in and through practices (see, for example, Braun *et al.* 2010).

Nevertheless, much of what we do is framed by our responses to the perceived ideas of ourselves that come from others. Such perceptions are not always accurate, given that the sense in which we are often objectified by the Other in ways over which we have no control. Nevertheless, our existence with the Other amounts in part to the production of our 'self' in the world, distinct from the fundamental pre-reflectivity of our being. Whereas some accounts of the constructions of teachers' identities take a rather fatalistic approach to the possibility of resistance, for Sartre, this produced self is *always* responded to in some sense. And just because we are in some way 'made' and thus limited by our existence with the Other, we are not fully acquitted of the responsibility for ourselves in such situations. Let us consider some examples of these responses in teaching, and how the teacher-student relationship might exemplify and expand upon Sartre's account of our existence with others.

The Solipsistic Teacher
Sartre spends much of his account of the Other refuting the idea that we might ever experience a solipsistic frame of mind. And yet, a teacher might invoke such a response in the classroom – a 'practical solipsism' perhaps. This response is practical in the sense that, in doing so, the acute feeling of being exposed towards Others is pacified to some degree. In 'doubting' the subjectivity of others, one is then able to assert their own subjectivity, and therefore to think of themselves as the sole point of reference for themselves and for the world. In my own experience, the times when I *did* feel more comfortable were the times when I thought of the class as an 'anonymous' they, when I tried to ignore the fact that I was *being seen* in some way by a plurality of subjectivities. Or, at least, I convinced myself that I was merely performing in my role, and that it therefore wasn't really 'me' on display in the classroom, the 'real me' being beyond reproach (or so I thought).

Since so much of what the teacher does is underpinned by a sense of exposure towards the other, the solipsistic approach is inherently unstable. Indeed, the very attempt to pacify this acute sense of exposure shows that we are implicitly aware of our existence before others. With particularly difficult classes, I could try to convince myself that I didn't care what the students thought of me as a person. But this forced indifference never quite worked, not because I am an especially sensitive person, but because one needs the mediation of Others in order to know *who they are*. Even if I convinced myself that these negative perceptions of me were down to my being a teacher, and even if I truly believed that they should not be taken personally, I was nevertheless still affected by my *interpretation* of the freedom of the Other – i.e. how it was that I thought they were interpreting me. Thus, the role of a teacher is produced through the Other in ways over which one has no direct control, or indeed no direct knowledge of, since each person comes with their own implicit view of what being a(n effective) teacher 'looks like' (albeit often with shared commonalities). Even our attempts to perform 'effectively' is no guarantee of how we will be seen by the Other. And yet, this is also true of one's *self* - it does not simply disappear once a teacher steps 'into' and 'out' of the role despite, perhaps, efforts to disguise oneself.

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Importantly, I am always responding to this production in some sense. I may respond by incorporating those particular expectations that are imposed on me via the freedom of the Other, inculcating as best as I can what the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines* call 'effective practice', or perhaps falling in line with what I think the students expect of me. I may respond by resisting these expectations in some way, like the rebellious John Keating from 'Dead Poet's Society', or Don Dunne from 'Half Nelson', or indeed, all of the more subtle ways that teachers subvert the expectations imposed on them from parents, students, the institution of the school, or inspection regimes. In any case, the very ways in which one responds to this represents that indifference is not really an option, and that, fundamentally, we inescapably experience our being before others.

Being Seen
Sartre's idea of the 'look' is certainly reminiscent of what a teacher often feels like amid an inspection, and the heightened sense of awareness that this involves. What inspections (are in danger of) do(ing) is considering the practice of a teacher as somewhat distinct from their identity *as* teachers, as something which can therefore be measured, benchmarked and compared with what is laid out in profiles of effectiveness without implicating the teacher herself. Arguably, the role of the teacher is brought about by the performance of certain actions that we identify as 'teacherly', without which that very role itself would not be recognisable. And yet, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what being 'teacherly' consists in. Is it possible (or desirable), for example, to offer an exhaustive list all of the characteristics of 'teacherliness'?

One of the issues with this way of recognising teachers is that it leads to an essentialist conception of the teacher in terms of their function. Existentialist thinkers such as Marcel (2018; 2008; Tymieniecka, 2009) were rightly concerned about the reduction of individuals to their functions, where through performing and through being seen in line with one's role may come to be solely how individuals think of *themselves*. With teaching, however, not only is there a potential danger of being reduced to one's functions, but the porous nature of those functions themselves means that their fixation is an implicit form of bad faith, as explored in the previous chapter. Indeed, any attempt to characterise teaching in a way that is easily measured or 'evidenced' in terms of effectiveness leads to an inevitable reductiveness in what teaching entails – and, more importantly, what teachers experience in the classroom. This is in part because the teacher is 'existentially exposed' in an acute and pertinent way, where part of their work quite literally involves standing in front of a group of 'others' (i.e. students). As Standish (2014) points out, it is often through teaching that we become aware of our individual attributes for the first time – certain mannerisms we demonstrate or ways of speaking we had not realised. Indeed, the very *personhood* of the teacher is on display in the classroom, open to interpretation from others in often overwhelming ways. The extent to which teaching *affects* one on a personal level demonstrates this. And although having the skills to navigate this sense of exposure is important, there is always something inevitably unnerving about entering a classroom, where what happens there directly affects me because it is not just my 'function' that is on display, but my very being.

In Sartre's analysis, this ontological structure of being in the world with others is fundamental, and it is one of conflict – the Other who is attempting to assert their subjectivity by objectifying me, and me attempting to do the same in confrontation with the Other. This, it seems, is an inevitable process, one that we nevertheless try to circumvent in various ways. And whilst this conflict seems to capture the extant battle of wills that is not uncommon in a classroom, it does not capture the more *necessary* sense of vulnerability that teaching often involves. Indeed, not everything that happens in the classroom is conflictual, but instead, there are moments in which something like an 'armistice' with the Other can be maintained on some level. What might this look like?

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An Armistice with the Other?

As we have seen, Sartre sees our relationship with others in mainly conflictual terms (though not necessarily in a negative sense). But he also explores less overtly conflictual relations with others in terms of the artefacts we use that are not of our own making, artefacts that are often necessary in order to live in accordance with our fundamental projects. One example of this is 'language'. Indeed, as indicated throughout, language is not something that we as individuals create. Neither is it simply something that we 'use' in a technical sense. Rather, it implicitly indicates our relation with others. In our attempts to account for ourselves, for example, we strive to be intelligible, an intelligibility that is circumscribed by our existence with others. In order to express ourselves intelligibly, we must therefore accept a limitation that the Other imposes on us. We can, of course, *choose* to speak unintelligibly. But since unintelligibility itself is always framed by what is intelligible in the first place, it thus never quite 'escapes' this existence with others. And yet, neither does our use of language necessarily hinder the extent to which we are subjects in our own right.

In my music classes, I often worked with students on compositions. Composition requires a lot of technical know-how, such as a quasi-mathematical language necessary for written music to be intelligible, as well as a socio-historical orthodoxy adopted from stylistic references to famous composers thought to characterise different musical eras. Indeed, all of this prerequisite socio-historical and technical knowledge was necessary *in order for* the students to be able to compose, none of which, of course, was invented by the students themselves. As such, they were limited by certain artefacts produced by the Other. But this is not to suggest that the students were passive in their own compositions, nor that they adopted these artefacts in any 'linear' sense. Rather, they utilised them for their *own* means of expression and, in doing so, they created something new that bore their individual stamp. When we think back throughout the history of music, it would be difficult to think of any composer who created music out of a vacuum. Or, indeed, any writer like Sartre. And whilst many of the compositions pushed the limits of intelligibility, they always referred in some sense to stylistic and historical artefacts that came before. Sartre would say that such artefacts are contingent but necessary, and although they only make sense in reference to one's fundamental project (e.g. the wish to compose in the first place), they nevertheless indicate a 'we'-relation that cannot be denied. Importantly, this we-relation is not conflictual, but is a springboard from which further creation can ensue.

The Suspension of Being-for-the-Other

In one class, I told the students about more recent composers who attempted to push the boundaries of musical intelligibility, one typical example being John Cage and his piece *4'33"*.[10] As we sat and listened to the piece, it was no doubt uncomfortable at first. I was hypervigilant of the sense in which we were sitting there as bodies in silence, becoming more aware of my dry throat and my need to cough, the mouth sounds of other people, subtle attempts to stifle a snigger, the pronounced confusion. Eventually, all of that died down. Mind wandering, I became less and less aware of the presence of others at that moment. It wasn't a sort of indifference towards them, but an experience that I felt we were undergoing together. I paid closer attention to the sounds around us, realising (as Cage had probably intended) that we were not sitting in silence. In *4'33"*, the boundaries between the audience and the composer shifts. The music is not a fixed object in time and space - the notations on the page or the music that grasps a hold of our attention, mimicking certain stylistic orthodoxies that I mentioned

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[10] An experimental piece composed by Cage in 1952 for any instrument, with a score that instructs players to not play their instruments for 4 minutes and 33 seconds.

above.[11] Rather, it became a perpetually unfolding event only later fixed as an object through our discussions and analyses. But it wasn't just that we were actively involved in the creation of the piece in that moment – *we were the piece itself.*

Cage's piece is especially interesting since it seems to be, like consciousness, *without content*. It draws solely on the emotional sensibilities of the audience, who, rather than acting as objective observers analysing the piece from 'afar', relate to the 'music' in a distance-less sense. The divisions between object and subject are blurred, not only in terms of the relationship we have with Cage and with the piece itself, but also with one another. The piece is demanding in that sense, requiring a radical change in one's habitual perception, disrupting the need to offer explanation and analyses, and immobilising the drive towards the certainty that clearly delineated roles can offer us. Yet, the experience of discomfort that, in part, relate to this dissolution of boundaries is necessary for the execution of the piece itself. And in that immaterial space, in which myself and the Other were completely absorbed[12], our roles as teachers or students – as 'selves' and 'others' - were momentarily suspended.

As soon as we entered into the reflective plane of the piece, it was disturbed in some sense, and the role divisions between teacher and student resumed. We started to analyse the piece - its meanings, the intentions of the composer, its socio-historical context and influences. These reflections are, of course, invaluable. But the piece would never be experienced in the same way again – new sounds would replace old ones; the students would no longer experience the surprise upon realising there was 'no music'; they would no longer immediately encounter the piece without those reflections in mind. Indeed, there is a distinction between the piece as *performed* – the unfolding moment witnessed by all of us who experience and participate in its composition – and the piece as *executed* –having been *already* unfolded, lost in memory or in our explanations and reflections. The piece itself is therefore fleeting and fragile, as well as the moment in which the gaze is temporarily suspended. It takes just one moment of disruption – a student clears his throat, another's stomach rumbles - and we have then landed back in the room ever more exposed to one another.

In education, as in art, there is inevitably a process of unfolding, of suspension, of becoming and of encountering, where teachers and students work together in attempting to grapple with something. Any reflections on these moments will disrupt them, and hence, the difficulties in accounting for this in language arises. Sartre recognises these 'suspended' moments of pure consciousness when he talks about the self. Since such moments of production are disruptive, it may in part explain why he focuses so heavily on the conflictual nature of our relations with others. In the educational context, we can easily pinpoint such examples – the inspector who is watching us makes us perform in a way that bars these more absorbing moments from taking place, or our hypervigilance when entering the classroom for the first time. But not all our experiences with the Other result in these moments of production, nor the conflict that underpins them. Importantly, such moments of production are not problems to be overcome, but merely how it is that we are in the world (with others). And yet, in those educational moments that we fail to capture in language, in reflection, in our measurement of ourselves and others, such suspension does, indeed, appear to be not only possible, but necessary.

7.7 Being an 'Authentic' Teacher?

As I have indicated throughout Part II, engaging with Sartre allows new ways in which to understand and reflect on being a teacher, ways that do not seek to suppress but rather embrace

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[11] Of course, the unorthodoxy of the piece can only be understood in relation to the orthodoxy of music more broadly, hence it still does not escape the 'we-relation'.

[12] Or at least, potentially so – I'm sure there were a number of students who did not find it so absorbing!

the uncertainty and paradoxes that teaching often involves. Certain conceptions of being a human in Sartre's account are directly relevant in that sense – the tensions of freedom and facticity in the classroom, the prevalence of bad faith in descriptions of classroom practice, the many aspects of being a teacher that relate to being seen by others. These examples serve as an extension of Sartre, a way in which to demonstrate how his accounts of being human make sense in the context of teaching. What I have thus begun to offer is an existentialist account of teaching, one that goes against the technological models discussed in Part I.

Up until now, I have (like Sartre) taken what might be called a 'via negativa' approach, indicating the ways in which an engagement with his thought is distinct from - and reveals misconceptions in - how we currently understand and account for the practices of teaching. But this engagement has left me wondering – given all of this, how, indeed, might one try to live or to teach *authentically*? Is even an approach towards this possible, and what might it involve? Authenticity, as discussed, is a concept that Sartre implies but fails to elaborate, except through somewhat melodramatic examples.[13] But isn't there instead an authenticity more subtle than that? Perhaps what the policies outlined in Part I *really* call for is a kind authenticity – honesty, perhaps - in our accounts. But since this is difficult to measure, certainty and objectivity – or at least a pacifying of the anxieties around risk – seem to be implied instead (Todd, 2016; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2019). But does this mean that a pursuit of honest forms of accounting for oneself should therefore be abandoned?

Whilst I do not aim to explicitly address normative claims around what 'authenticity' looks like, nor offer prescriptions for how one ought to live or teach as an authentic human being (with others), I would nevertheless like to consider a more practical approach in relation to this question, one that may help to carve out ways in which to account for ourselves in more authentic terms. Arguably, this is absent from the philosophical writings of Sartre, particularly given his suspicion of being sincere about oneself in the first place. But he *does* exemplify something close to this when writing his own autobiography, *Words.* In order to analyse this, I turn to another important thinker - Michel Foucault - and his discussion of 'parrhesia'. Despite differences in Sartre and Foucault's lines of thinking, looking at what might be called a 'parrhesiastic account' of oneself allows us to begin to consider what an existentialist account of teaching might involve, one that is ultimately more sensitive to the lived realities of teaching than the technicist accounts in Part I. A comparison between technicist and existentialist forms of accounting is further developed in the final chapter. First, let us digress for a moment to consider the very possibility of accounting for being a teacher in this way, and what difficulties or 'risks' this might involve.

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[13] I am thinking here of the scene in which Matthieu in the *Age of Reason* thrusts a knife into his hand in order to demonstrate that he *can* act in spite of circumstances that seem to limit him, and that acting in this way is somehow an example of living authentically. And yet, there seems to be something curiously *inauthentic* about this example – a sort of forced sincerity that is very much the epitome of bad faith.

PART III:

Being a Teacher

8

Care of Oneself

8.1 Foucault and Care of the Self

The concept of 'parrhesia' in the later thought of Michel Foucault may open up new ways in which to account for oneself and one's practices as a teacher, ways that move beyond the technicist model exemplified in Part I. In this chapter, I will consider the autobiographical work of Sartre as exemplifying a 'parrhesiastic approach' in accounting for oneself, one that reveals the paradoxes, uncertainties and risks of putting oneself into words. Towards the end of the chapter, I tentatively offer three 'parrhesiastic techniques' such as to reimagine account-giving for teachers, thereby pointing to the possibility of moving from technicist to existential sensitivity in relation to their lived experiences. This latter form of account-giving calls for the continuing reconceptualization of the language often used to describe teachers and teaching, something I more fully develop in the final chapter.

It is important to clarify that Foucault was by no means an existentialist. Despite both being similarly active in a political sense, Sartre and Foucault are often seen to represent 'opposite poles of the philosophical globe' (Flynn, 2004, p. 47). Foucault is overtly anti-humanist in his stance, particularly in his initial refusal to resort to any theory of the subject. Sartre, on the other hand, is often accused of downplaying the structural constraints of historical and social circumstances on individual freedom (Gillam, 2013), something very much central to Foucault's work. Indeed, Sartre was also not a post-structuralist. For one, he did not write at length about the nature of 'truth' in the way that Foucault did. Whilst he does not seem to deny the existence of 'truth', he perhaps thought that this question was not worth pursuing, given that we can only come to know reality through consciousness and therefore cannot 'access' brute existence in its fullness. When he (1973a; 1995; 2004; 2006) *does* touch upon the subject of truth – for example, in the *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning*, in *Search for a Method*, and also in his posthumously published work *Truth and Existence* – it is more so 'historical truth' that he is interested in, a truth that gains significance from its relation to human totality and not from its correspondence to accuracy in terms 'brute facts'.[1] Arguably, this understanding of truth is not far removed from the post-structuralist conception. For our purposes here, my concern is mainly with this understanding of truth, especially in terms of engaging with our own personal histories, since it is this conception that is central to Foucault's ideas around parrhesia.

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[1] In *Truth and Existence*, Sartre clarifies his position against those who argue that his view makes a 'common world' impossible, given that, for him, my relation with others is always in conflict. In turn, this allows Sartre to accept an intersubjective understanding of truth and meaning. Catalano (2007) has attempted to summarise this position on truth, where he argues that, for Sartre, truth is (always) a relation between *for-itself* and all of human reality – it is 'what happens to reality when it encounters human existence' (Catalano, 2007, p. 49). Since all human reality is constituted by 'social facts', such facts are *also* truth, and not simply what we call 'brute' facts (See, for example: Sartre, 1973a).

Interestingly, both Sartre and Foucault moderated their positions towards the end of their lives. But perhaps the main tension between both thinkers is in relation to the question of agency. As we will explore more fully here, Sartre later began to acknowledge the importance of circumstances in our ability to act freely, particularly in his later attempts to combine existentialism with Marxism. Indeed, a softer interpretation of Sartre (one that is arguably taken throughout this thesis) takes into account this situatedness of the individual as impinging upon the direction of their free actions, where actions are only meaningful in relation to our understanding of and response to those situations. Moreover, the later Foucault acknowledges a sense of agency in subjects[2] where power relations might be understood as 'transversal' – i.e. no longer total or hegemonic, and thus, with 'the scope for *resistance*… widened exponentially' (Leask, 2011, p. 63). According to Foucault (1990a), we are, in fact, 'always free', even if that freedom is not always 'enjoyed' within the constraints of institutional power. Freedom is a form of resistance – 'for all, by all, everywhere' (Leask, 2011, p. 66) – one that is ontologically prior to power. This, in turn, opens up spaces for 'acting and thinking differently about our relation to ourselves and others' (Ball, 2019, p. 133), and is particularly important for how we might account for ourselves within institutional contexts. In an interview given in 1984, Foucault (1987, p. 123) remarks that, whilst he does not deny this original emphasis on power, he also acknowledges 'the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion by the practices of self.' Like Sartre, Foucault implies that there is always the possibility to respond to powerful forces, and that 'power' only exists *because* 'freedom [is] everywhere' (Foucault, 1987, p. 124). In any case, both concern themselves with the active subject – for Sartre, the subject as always responding to (and thus responsible for) the situations in which they find themselves, and for Foucault, the subject that resists domination through aesthetic practices of the self. Perhaps in bringing both into dialogue, a more satisfying picture of agentic action can thus be offered, and whilst it may not be possible to synthesise both viewpoints, they may nevertheless serve to enrich each other in some respects (Flynn, 2004).

As some have suggested (e.g. Flynn, 2004; Seitz, 2004), it is in Foucault's later ideas regarding philosophy as 'care of the self' that similarities between him and Sartre might be found. As we saw in Chapter 3, existentialism is in many ways a reactionary attitude rather than a doctrine with firm and consistent tenets. Foucault also takes a similar stance in his later writings, where he argues that having a 'critical attitude' allows us to respond to situations that appear to limit us. Where philosophy is understood as something pertaining to lived experience rather than abstract principles, both positions seek to avoid clear prescriptions for 'correct' responses, and in this sense, both flourish in terms of how they open up spaces for thinking anew.

Foucault's discussion on parrhesia is one aspect of this wider project concerning 'care of the self'. Parrhesia is intimately connected to an ancient form of ethics (which he explores in relation to Greek and Roman contexts), one that concerns a 'harmonious life' (White, 2014, p. 491). He (1987) defines 'care of the self' as the following:

> …an attitude, a mode of behaviour; it became instilled in ways of living… developed into procedures, practices, formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, taught. It thus came to constitute social practices, giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions.

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[2] In fact, Foucault never quite denied this agency, but merely shifted his emphasis in his later years. Unlike Sartre, who later claimed that all power is 'evil', Foucault sees power as a given – neither good nor bad, existing across all relations and not simply in relations between individuals and institutions. For a more thorough examination of this, see Foucault (1987).

In the Ancient Greek context, 'care of the self' is connected to the Delphic maxim 'know thyself', involving 'those intentional and voluntary actions by which men [sic] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves in their singular being, and to make their lives into an oeuvre' (Foucault, 1990b, p. 10). Knowing oneself was not originally 'epistemological' (Hattam and Baker, 2016). Rather, it related to caring for one's soul as well as the souls of others through specific practices that focused on examining oneself and one's interlocutors. Importantly, care here is not understood in the purely empathetic sense, but is formative in nature (Rytzler, 2019). In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault (2005) refers to this as a 'turning [of] one's gaze inwards' in order to actively and continually cultivate one's 'self' through specific techniques. As we will later see, this is turn relates to how one might respond to themselves in parrhesiastic forms of account-giving, a process that is nevertheless not without challenges.

Foucault is not suggesting that we return to antiquity, but he believes that such an approach to self-care is possible in modern life – and perhaps even necessary. According to White (2014), the modern sense of ethics often refers to a duty that comes from external impositions, or what Foucault might understand as an obedience to externally-set rules and procedures. Care of the self offers an antidote to this, since its primary focus is on the inner life of the individual. In this sense, the 'self' is regarded as a work of art – not a fixed object that can be moulded through disciplinary procedures, but rather, an ongoing process, similar to Sartre's own understanding of the 'self in the world'. For Foucault, this 'self' has become impoverished in modern times - for one, it is bombarded with identities from the outside. Care of the self may allow us to free ourselves from the ways in which we are subject to such modes of self-production. Indeed, for Foucault, it is in 'our capacity and opportunity to participate in self-formation' (Ball, 2016, p. 66), that a person can 'become other than how [they] find [themselves]' (Foucault, 2001). In other words, through *responding* to oneself, the discourses that come to 'define' you in the world may be disrupted. Importantly, the ethical thrust of the care of the self does not involve overthrowing power relations in general (which Foucault does not think is possible in any case). It is a 'deliberate practice of liberty' (Foucault, 1987, p. 116), where one takes a particular attitude towards oneself, the world, and others - 'an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform… and to attain a certain mode of being', to restore one's roots, and to live in a 'full and positive relation with oneself'(Foucault, 1987, p. 114).

Care of oneself might sound self-indulgent but, as we will examine later, it implies both a care of others and care of the world. For Foucault, however, caring for oneself is always ontologically prior to caring for others.[3] What Foucault is getting at is arguably quite similar to Sartre's understanding of the pre-reflective cogito[4] – that in order for there to *be* relations with others, or indeed with the world, there must first be an awareness of one's own subjectivity, where 'the very possibility to govern the other is conditioned upon first being capable of self-governance' (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019, p. 105). In this sense, the practices that constitute 'care of the self' involve reciprocal relations with others, but also with the world more broadly, since it is in these relations that one cares about oneself in the first place:

> A person who cares about something identifies with that which she cares about. She is concerned with what concerns her objects of care. She makes herself vulnerable to losses if what she cares about is diminished and is proud of the success if what she cares about succeeds. In short, she is invested in the object of care (Wong, 2013, p. 106).

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[3] Some accuse the later Foucault of not recognising intersubjectivity in the formation of subjects, and since such self-indulgence is insufficient in dismantling power relations, it is also depoliticising. According to Wong (2013), however, such criticisms represent a misunderstanding of what Foucault means by 'ontological priority'.

[4] Although Wong (2013) disagrees with this assertion.

Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019) draw similar parallels in their ontology of teaching. According to them (2019, p. 128), '[*b]eing* a teacher means that one testifies to a love for the world, and that one puts the truth of this devotion to the test… in the view of attention, love and care for an object of study they must engender in the new generation.' This care for *something* is what makes teaching an educational endeavour - a care for something worth preserving (without the necessary external justification), or worth paying attention to.[5] This is not to deny the relational dimension of teaching, particularly in the accounts we give. But it is to say that such accounts of oneself (in the world) are always *ontologically prior* to any relational account of teaching and learning. It is for this reason, then, that throughout this section in particular, I have tended towards offering accounts primarily from the perspective of teaching.

Moreover, whilst care of the self involves the other and the world, this involvement is not what makes it an ethical endeavour. For Foucault, the care of things outside of oneself are *measures* of this care. For instance, in order to take care of oneself, one should seek teachers or mentors to test and examine their accounts, where doing so more explicitly shows a willingness to take responsibility for how one has lived. Care, as mentioned, is not an act of empathy – it is, in fact, a *critical* act, where one *must* be willing to 'adopt a critical stance that oscillates between attempts to recreate ourselves and the world, and in doing so, make ourselves vulnerable… to interrogation' (Ball, 2019, p. 138). Critique is not simply a matter of 'identifying the unrecognised forms of power in people's lives' (Olssen, 2006, p. 245), but about exposing such limitations in order to respond to them. This involves an attitude of *permanent* criticism, one that is possible through ongoing aesthetic practices of the self. Critique is also not prescriptive, and it involves risk – and therefore courage – to jeopardise intelligibility in our accounts, to risk uncertainty and unsettledness, anxiety and destabilisation, to 'write about ourselves as something we are not yet, and may come to disavow' (Ball, 2016b, p. 72), where we are thus forced to take responsibility to 'choose ourselves through what we do' (Ball, 2016b, p. 73). Such risk, as we will later see, is both necessary and desirable (Todd 2003; 2016; Biesta, 2014; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2019).

The critical attitude that Foucault calls for is similar to Sartre's understanding of good faith. As we have seen, good faith is difficult to define, particularly since it so often leads us to assume that, in being in good faith (e.g. in being sincere) it is possible to attain a fixed character trait that ensures that we are *always* in good faith. But this, in fact, is an example of *bad* faith, since it radically reduces our freedom and responsibility to *be otherwise*. Indeed, being in good faith is not the same as being a 'good person' (now and forever). Rather, we are responsible for *continually* putting good faith into practice. Moreover, since good faith is a pre-requisite to authenticity, where authenticity is conceived here as a 'reflective' attitude that comes about through our persistent and ongoing attempts to remain honest with ourselves, it is therefore crucial for the enactment of parrhesiastic (self-)practices.

Care of the self involves not only a critical relation to oneself and others, but also to 'truth'. As we will explore with concept of parrhesia, it is not only concerned with *particular* truth positions, but with using philosophy as a tool in order to examine and test the consistency by which one relates themselves to such truths, and how they employ these truths in order to justify their lives and the conduct of others. In this sense, philosophical discourse is a 'spiritual activity' that requires the performance of 'truth games' in order to understand one's wider commitments and conduct in the world. This is distinct from the Cartesian notion of truth (Papadimos *et al*, 2013), one that equates to a debased sense of accuracy so often emphasised

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[5] For Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019), this care for the 'something' in education is ontologically prior to the care for others in the educational context, a care that is equated with care for oneself as a teacher (where the 'object' of teaching is not distinct from the 'teaching self'), something that they accuse certain thinkers of missing out on – e.g. Biesta (e.g. 2017) in his relational view of teaching. Bonnett (2010) also makes a similar argument.

in self-evaluation accounts, for instance. For Descartes, accounting for oneself becomes a matter of judging the truth of our actions in propositional terms. This in turn reduces moral self-examination to a purely rationalistic endeavour, and it also allows for a disconnect between truth and selfhood, where the pursuit of truth does not implicate (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019) nor demands any work on the self (Hattam and Baker, 2016). [6] Truth in the parrhesiastic sense, however, is a truth that can be disrupted through the forms of critique where one 'relates' themselves through certain practices, an example of which is the parrhesiastic act of account-giving explored here.

Thus, 'care of the self' is concerned with the relation of truth. It understands that self-examination is not simply a matter of introspective verification, but instead opens up the possibility for radical transformation in our own self-understanding. For Foucault, this is the way in which one attains freedom, and through which one is able to legislate for oneself in more 'authentic' terms. For Sartre, of course, freedom is not something to be attained, but is inherent in all our actions and responses in the world. And yet, a 'conversion', premised on an ongoing attempt to remain in 'good faith', is necessary in order for one to live more authentically. Living authentically is a reflective practice in which our freedom is *realised* – something that can be anxiety-inducing (since it may undermine our then-current self-understanding) and is thus often avoided in different ways.

8.2 Care of the Self as Parrhesia

In a series of lectures delivered shortly before his death, Foucault (2001) offers a genealogy of the concept of 'truth-telling' in Ancient Greece, relating this to the abovementioned care of the self. Throughout the lecture, he examines the so-called 'crisis of parrhesia' – when parrhesia was first considered in the Ancient Greek context as a concept worth paying attention to. Most commonly, parrhesia is understood as a form of frank truth-telling, where one 'says everything' and 'opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse, [giving] a complete and exact account of what he has in his mind so that the audience is able to comprehend exactly what the speaker thinks' (Foucault, 2001, p. 12). Importantly, parrhesia therefore requires direct and unembellished forms of expression. By speaking in a parrhesiastic way, the parrhesiastes concern is with telling as well as situating themselves in relation to 'truth'. Where our modern epistemology seems to claim that truth is that which corresponds to evidential experience (related to clear and distinct ideas in a Cartesian sense), truth in the case of parrhesia involves a different attitude entirely. For the Greeks, truth is only guaranteed through the ongoing cultivation of particular moral qualities, qualities 'which are required, first, to know the truth, and, secondly, to convey such truth to others' (Foucault, 2001, p. 15). To say that truth is an ethical rather than epistemological is not to deny the existence of 'truth' in the Cartesian sense, but merely to distinguish it from a truth that 'matters', i.e. a truth where there is something 'at stake'.

In speaking a truth that 'matters', one is often put in danger - anger from one's interlocutor, a risk to one's social standing within certain groups. It might even result in a threat to one's life if employed in order to challenge political authority, for example. Another form of danger implicit in the practice of parrhesia relates to the possibility of criticism from one's interlocutors. This, in fact, is the very purpose of parrhesia - 'not to demonstrate the truth to someone else, but [with] the function of *criticism*: criticism of the interlocutor or of the speaker himself' (Foucault, 2001, p. 17). Parrhesia involves speaking the truth as a way to demonstrate one's commitments, and to measure the extent to which those commitments are present in one's

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[6] Of course, truth can be understood in different ways – or, at least, it has different stakes depending on the context. The 'medicalisation of madness', for instance, purports a 'truth' in order to normalise behaviour. Truth in the field of mathematics arguably does not serve the same function, or at least is circumscribed by a very different truth-power relation. See Foucault (1987; 2006)

actions and deeds, where inconsistencies may pave the way for self-criticism. Because of this, the measure of the sincerity of parrhesiastic truth is courage, something that is not always the case when speaking 'truth' in a Cartesian sense, where there is no necessary risk involved.[7] Self-criticism should be understood as a duty – it is not something that can be forced upon a person, but rather, must be freely chosen in spite of the dangers it poses to oneself and one's relationship with others. (Self-)criticism is often necessary in order to establish a closer union between the values one is committed to and the ways in which one acts, but it is also concerned with encouraging others to do so as well. Indeed, by acting as a 'touchstone' through which such forms of (self-)criticism is modelled, one also incites others to do the same.

Parrhesia can be understood in a political and a personal sense. In relation to the political context of Ancient Greece[8], it was seen as both a tool and an impediment to democracy. This is because parrhesia is closely related to the right to speak freely, something that is often understood as the hallmark of democracies, and yet, also a potential threat. Within this context, the problem or 'crisis' of parrhesia arises, with important questions emerging as a result. Who, indeed, has the right to speak freely? And how is this decided? What does this speaking freely look like in practice, and how might we measure the extent of its sincerity? Parrhesia is often seen in opposition to forms of rhetoric that seek to embellish the truth, where one's only concern is in convincing others regardless of one's own standing. Embellishment is also used with the function of appeasement in mind, the aim of which is to neutralise rather than encourage (self-)criticism.[9] But this appeasement might also appear is more surreptitious forms. The norms of deliberation exemplified in the 'third way' approach in both self-evaluation policies as well as the wider socio-political culture in Ireland is, in many ways, the opposite of parrhesiastic acts.

In demonstrating the shift from political to personal parrhesia, Foucault (2001) uses the example of Socrates, a 'touchstone' who, like many of the existentialists, aim to evoke responses from his interlocutors that encourage parrhesiastic accounts. Importantly, since Socrates exemplifies both forms, the political and personal should not be understood as wholly distinct. Socratic dialogues, for example, involve what Foucault calls 'parrhesiastic games' – games that are face-to-face and personal, where interlocutors are not only 'shown' the truth but are actively encouraged to situate themselves in relation to what they say. But these dialogues are also intensely political, serving as a model for more authentic forms of democratic deliberation where political authorities can be held to account. Importantly, Socratic dialogues involve giving an account of oneself not as a 'therapy' of unburdening oneself. In order to live harmoniously, an account that reveals the extent to which there is a concordance between words, actions and values is necessary. But *how* do we account for this concordance, and is it possible to do so sincerely?

8.3 Parrhesia and Bad Faith

Although Sartre never used the term 'parrhesia' himself, it may in some sense be understood as the opposite to bad faith. As we have seen, bad faith is best understood as a form of self-denial that aims at curbing the anxiety that admitting to the freedom underpinning our

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[7] Foucault uses the example of a mathematics teacher teaching a theorem to children. The teacher knows that what he is teaching is the truth. There is no real risk in him teaching this concept to the children, and it is therefore not a parrhesiastic form of truth. Of course, there are examples that show that speaking certain (e.g. scientific) truths *does* require courage, where doing so involves a threat to one's life. Hence, the separation of Cartesian truths and truth in a parrhesiastic sense are not absolute. If speaking scientific truths involves risk and courage, one is also practising a form of parrhesia, since this involves a form of commitment to the *value* of the truth where there is something at stake.

[8] A discussion on this can be found in Hodgson (2010).

[9] Of course, rhetorical devices are used by Socrates, and also by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, but with a different purpose in mind – they encourage rather than neutralise debate, forcing individuals to take up a relation to truth.

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commitments involves. But as we have also seen, it also relates to the denial of our ability to respond to the 'factual limitations' of our existence. Such uneasy tensions between facticity and freedom underline the human condition, and it is within this that the difficulties in accounting for oneself might best be understood.

Interestingly, Butler (2005) refers to similar tensions, albeit in more subtle terms. In accounting for oneself, one is constrained by the norms through which one can be made intelligible to the other. But whilst, for Butler (2005, p. 11), the 'I' is always 'implicated in a set of conditioning norms', that is not to say that one is completely stripped of agency, or indeed, responsibility. In accounting for myself, I always take up a particular relation to those norms, relations that also open up spaces such that these norms can be challenged or potentially overturned. This is in part possible because of the parrhesiastic relation we establish between ourselves and certain regimes of truth, where a 'critical opening' appears, and where a potential rupture on the horizon of normativity is therefore made possible. In the meantime, however, we are engaged within a perpetual struggle, given that we are neither radically determined nor radically free in our accounts of ourselves, and that, in self-creation, one 'invariably struggles with conditions of one's own life that one could not have chosen' (Butler, 2005, p. 19).

Like bad faith, central to any discussion on parrhesia is the question of responsibility towards oneself and others, since such practices inevitably involve a 'scene' in which both the other and myself are addressed (Butler, 2005; Brady, 2020c). There is always a risk in these moments of address. The courage that parrhesia requires is in part to do with our vulnerability towards being unconcealed in some way, through exposing to ourselves and to others the extent to which we are willing to take responsibility for the ways we have lived. But whereas bad faith allows us to (temporarily) pacify anxieties around confronting this responsibility, parrhesiastic practices encourage such risks as a measure of our own sincerity. When parrhesia occurs alongside an interlocutor, it also involves a danger in terms of how the Other may define us, something we considered in Chapter 7. However, according to Foucault (2001, p. 17), this is an essential component of parrhesiastic practices:

> When you accept the parrhesiastic game in which your own life is exposed, you are taking up a specific relationship to yourself: you risk death to tell the truth instead of reposing in the security of a life where the truth goes unspoken. Of course, the threat... comes from the Other, and thereby requires a relationship with the Other. But the *parrhesiastes* primarily chooses a specific relationship to himself: he prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself (Foucault, 2001, p. 17).

In offering an account of ourselves, the extent to which we can really be 'authentic' is tricky. This is especially complicated when, as Sartre (2000b, p. 45) points out, it is impossible to judge retrospectively the extent to which we have acted sincerely in the past, as he reflects upon in his autobiography:

> I have set down the facts as accurately as memory permits. But how far did I believe in my frenzy? That is the basic question and I cannot make up my mind about it. I realised afterwards that it is possible to know everything about our affections except their strength; that is to say, their sincerity. Actions themselves will not serve as a standard unless it has been proven that they are not gestures, which is not always easy.

As we saw in Chapter 6, gestures are intimately connected to the concept of role-playing. Even in performing such roles with utmost sincerity, we may still fall into bad faith with ourselves, where being too sincere about our roles may lead to us thinking of ourselves *only* in those terms. Importantly, parrhesiastic sincerity requires perpetual self-vigilance and self-examination, an ongoing struggle to remain honest with oneself in taking stock of how we are

living our lives. In this sense, the authenticity that comes to define parrhesiastic practices is not conceptualised as a 'fixed quality', where we assume that, in being a 'sincere person', my accounts will *always* be sincere, and should therefore *always* be trusted. Like parrhesia, rather than a character trait that (through cultivation) 'disposes' me towards more sincere and honest actions in the future, authenticity must continually be *put to the test.* In order to explore this further, let us consider an example of parrhesiastic practices in relation to Sartre's autobiographical writing.

8.4 Autobiographical Writing as a Parrhesiastic Practice

It is worth noting that, throughout the lecture series, Foucault (2001) presents parrhesiastic practices in accounting for ourselves as distinct from confessional forms of autobiographies. Parrhesiastic practices do not entail providing a narrative of historical events that have taken place in one's life, but instead situating oneself in relation to the truth that is revealed in those events. The former is how autobiographical writing might be conventionally understood – the mere reporting of things that have happened to us in the past which are no longer subject to change, or a confession of sorts where one unburdens their feelings of guilt or provides justification for their past actions. And yet, when we consider the idea that recounting significant moments from our past is always tied to the lens of the present moment – a moment which comprises of a matured acquisition of language and experience - then to what extent can we really claim that such an account is mere reporting? In the process of autobiographical writing, is there something we learn about ourselves that is concerned with more than just accuracy or justification?

Autobiographical practices inevitably involve a (re)interpretation and (re)analysis of events and their supposed influence on our words and deeds, and in doing so, one is continually (re)situating oneself in relation to the 'truth' of what has happened (Brady, 2020c). It is, as we will later discuss, not that each new account is superior to the former, but they are distinct in some ways, in part to do with the changing nature of our commitments, or indeed, the changing nature of our *selves*. With regards to this, Butler (2005) addresses the extent to which such accounts of oneself can ever be non-confessional in nature. But parrhesia is not simply a way to bring one's words in harmony with their deeds. It acknowledges that speaking *itself* is a moral practice, a social exchange through which one can attain a new level of self-awareness, and through which the speaker can internalise this 'parrhesiastic struggle' to account for themselves and their particular ways of being in the world. In other words, accounting for oneself is a way in which to lay oneself 'bare'. According to Butler (2005, p.131) a confessional approach in this sense may allow for a 'critical opening' within the process of self-(re)formation. In making oneself intelligible to the world, it is also a means of 'publishing' oneself:

> Giving an account of oneself is thus also a kind of showing of oneself, a showing for the purpose of testing whether the account seems right, whether it is understandable by the other, who "receives" the account through one set of norms or another.

Given this, we may need to rethink how it is that one may account for oneself in a way that corresponds to parrhesiastic practices, but that also takes into account the furtive ways in which bad faith seeps into these accounts. Indeed, a publication of oneself in such a way as to become 'intelligible' can implicitly involve a denial of our freedom to respond to facticity, or to the objectification that is imposed by our relationship with others. For this reason, autobiographical writing engenders both a vulnerability and a confessionalism, and it is therefore a site upon which a parrhesiastic relation with oneself is possible, despite the bad faith that may be apparent in such accounts.

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Frankness and (Self-)Criticism

At the age of 59, Sartre (2000b) decided to write an autobiography entitled *Words*, covering roughly the first ten years of his life. The text is punctuated with particularly poignant but seemingly insignificant moments of his upbringing. It also serves as a critical commentary of the bourgeois values that underpinned much of what he understood about the world at the time. Unlike many of his philosophical texts, *Words* is clear and unembellished, written in a jargon-free, 'everyday' language. Haphazard, it represents more closely what the experience of remembering feels like, and it is through engaging with this work that we gain access to the intimate memories that Sartre himself permits us. First drafted between 1954-1957, *Words* was revised and eventually redrafted almost ten years later (Whitmire, 2006). It therefore demonstrates how Sartre's seemingly uncompromising position on freedom and responsibility softened considerably in his later years. Indeed, *Words* can be read as a palimpsest of sorts, one that reveals an uneasy tension between the existentialist idea of radical freedom in making who we are, and the Marxist idea that who we are is conditioned by our past and by our social circumstances.

How does Sartre navigate these two opposing ideas?[10] There is a certain frankness when he admits that much of his upbringing allowed him opportunities that would later influence his decision to become a writer. This, in fact, appeared to be determined from the very start. Throughout, he (2000b, p. 53) consistently refers to the effects that circumstances and the adults in his childhood had on the bourgeois values he uncritically held, referring to himself as a 'monster they were forming out of their regrets.' His grandfather, Charles, was particularly significant in this regard, so much so that Sartre (2000b, p. 108) saw his future as a writer to be a fully determined fact, 'just as Charles was [his] grandfather, by birth and for ever.' Admittedly, his exposure to Marxist ideas undermined the more radical anti-determinism of his earlier works. The very act of autobiographical writing revealed such tensions in his thoughts, thoughts he would later moderate considerably, even going so far as to confess that those ideas which made him the most famous were, in fact, over-stated (Sartre, 2008b). There is a vulnerability in what he writes, in how he (2000b, p. 27) portrays himself as a coddled, precocious son, a 'cultural possession' who was both impregnated with and reflected bourgeois values, a child marked by 'arrogant hypocrisy' who 'knew [his] worth' (Sartre, 2000b, p. 20). Such statements are forms of self-criticism that the older Sartre directs towards his self as a child *as well as* his self as an 'existentialist'. They are also criticisms towards bourgeoisie values in general, many of which his readers might recognise in themselves. By exposing his own hypocrisy, he is therefore exposing the hypocrisy of his audience.

Should Sartre be criticised for inconsistencies between his later and earlier thought? Perhaps. The point here is not to argue about these thoughts specifically, but rather, the way in which we can account for such inconsistencies, and how, in fact, inconsistencies seem to be an inevitable aspect of *any* account we offer of ourselves. Importantly, in accounting for discrepancies between what we think now and what we thought in the past, there is a certain self-criticism that we are opening ourselves up to – a way in which we can therefore (re)situate ourselves in relation to the truth of these events. Furthermore, in revealing such changes or contradictions in our thinking, we are also in some ways directing (though not determining)

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[10] Rather than resolving these dichotomies, Sartre attempts to maintain an ambiguous tension between both, as indicated in one revealing section: 'When I was in a good mood, everything came from myself… an obedient child, I would obey until I died, but I would obey myself. When I was depressed and aware of the sickening feebleness of my availability, I was able to soothe myself only by forcing it on predestination… I was merely the product of collective demand. Most of the time, I achieved peace of mind by taking care never to exclude altogether either the freedom which exalts or the necessity which justifies.' (Sartre, 2000b, p. 109)

our future action, much in the way that Sartre had later attempted (perhaps unsuccessfully) to re-invent his earlier work to account for his new Marxist-inspired ideas.

Given the deep level of introspection that autobiographical writing involves, the critical openings that are necessary for a parrhesiastic relation with oneself are made available. In accounting for oneself in this way, we reveal ourselves to be different than we had initially thought. As Butler (2005) argues, there is an aspect of ourselves that is 'opaque' – parts of ourselves that can only be revealed through a relationship with the other who, in this case, might be thought of as the reader, or perhaps the writer of the present moment addressing the person they once were. This separation of the present and past selves may not be intentional in the strict sense, but it seems to be an inevitable aspect of (re)considering and (re)capturing 'who we were' in the past. But as Sartre says, this clear separation is purely an invention in the present moment (2000b, p. 126), a way in which to understand the 'self' as it exists in the world:

> It is no good putting yourself in the dead man's shoes… you cannot help assessing his behaviour in light of results which he could not foresee and of information which he did not possess, or attributing a particular solemnity to events whose effects marked him later, but which he lived through casually… It is not surprising: in a completed life, the end is taken as the truth of the beginning.

It is not always easy to talk in a sincere manner about how we behaved, and thus, perhaps this 'invention' is necessary in order to account for oneself in a more and open honest way. Much of *Words* serves as a confessional in this regard – Sartre is admitting to those moments in his life when he was an imposter, often with vehement criticism that we might not normally direct at a young child. He does not do so in order to unburden a sense of guilt in living the way that he did, nor to offer definitive explanations for why this is the case, but rather, to situate himself in relation to his past, encouraging his readers to do the same. In laying himself bare in this way, he is also forcing himself to take responsibility for the values he reflected, even if it means exposing a disharmony between his commitments then and his commitments today.

Truth, Sincerity and Bad Faith

But what if Sartre was wrong about *why* he behaved in the way that he did? Indeed, to what extent do autobiographies allow us to capture the 'truth' about our past and its relationship to now? In autobiographical writing, there is often an element of fictionalisation. Fictionalisation understood here is not only the extent to which we fabricate stories, or in terms of the explicit selectivity with which we remember events, often with a concern for how it is that we are portrayed to others and to future generations. It is, in fact, a way in which we *inevitably* relate to our past selves. In Borges (2000, pp. 98-99) short story *Funes, His Memory* about a man who cannot forget anything, he demonstrates how if we were unable to be selective in our memories, we would be also unable to account for anything at all:

> Funes, we must not forget, was virtually incapable of general, platonic ideas. Not only was it difficult for him to see that the generic symbol "dog" took in all the dissimilar individuals of all shapes and sizes, it irritated him that the "dog" of three-fourteen in the afternoon , seen in profile, should be indicated by the same noun as the dog of three-fifteen, seen frontally. His own face in the mirror, his own hands, surprised him every time he saw them… he *noticed* – the progress of death, of humidity. He was the solitary, lucid spectator of a multiform, momentaneous, and almost unbearably precise world…. I suspect, nonetheless, that he was not very good at thinking.

I am also speaking here of the invention of pre-determined destinies that we apply in retrospect, explanations that 'poison' the moments that originally moved us to act. Sartre (2000b, p. 127) does not directly accuse himself of this, but he does accuse other biographers:

> But here was the poison: without ever mentioning the name Rousseau, Bach, or Molière, the author deployed his skill in planting allusions everywhere to their future greatness, recalling casually, by some detail, their most famous works or actions, and arranging his narrative so that you could not grasp the most trivial incident without relating it to subsequent events.

There is a sense in which *Words* represents this same fictionalisation. As a child, for instance, Sartre was fond of role-playing. In recounting our past, the centrality of role-playing should be acknowledged, since it directly relates to our inability to deduce the sincerity of past motives. Indeed, as Sartre (2000b, p. 46) puts it, 'how could [one] pinpoint – especially after so many years – the intangible, shifting frontier that divides possession from play-acting?' How can one situate themselves in a relation of truth when the 'truth' of the past is unclear, where our motives are suspect? And what of our responsibility for those situations when, as we have seen, the distinction between role-playing as bad faith and the more 'authentic' choices we make based on commitments to certain values is thoroughly ambiguous? Perhaps fictionalisation is retrospective bad faith, where we look to the past as though our future was *already* determined to be what it is now. In doing so, are we avoiding the extent to which our past is constituted by an orientation to a then-unknown future, where 'who we are' now is, in fact, the result of a series of undetermined but fundamental choices?

Importantly, fictionalisation does not mean that our stories are somehow falsified *unless* we measure their sincerity only in terms of their correspondence to a debased sense of truth as accuracy. But the concern with accounting for oneself in this instance is not understood in this way. Its concern does not relate to how assured we can be about our interpretation of the past. It does not try to accurately measure correlations or causality in what has happened, nor understand with certainty what our 'true' motives were at that time and what that tells us about the person we are today. It does not deny the selectivity that accounting for the past must involve, and how that very process of selection may diverge in line with our changing fundamental commitments. Rather, such accounts are about how we situate ourselves *today* in relation to truth, understanding that commitments are made manifest in how we have acted *as well as* how we have interpreted these actions in the present moment. If we consider the past as 'facticity', it therefore *does* represent 'things that have happened', but not in a fixed sense. Rather, these moments are nevertheless continually responded to and (re)interpreted. As Sartre rightly argues, there is no neutral position from which to understand our past. Indeed, the act of autobiographical writing is, in itself, an act of existential freedom, and as Fell (1968, p. 429) puts it: '[p]erhaps the philosophy is not a product of [Sartre's] childhood, but rather childhood here 'recounted' is the product his philosophy.'

For Sartre, with such freedom comes responsibility. This implies that we are responsible not only for what has happened, but also for our (re)engagement with our past 'selves' and, indeed, for the accounts that we give. This responsibility in recounting the past is also tied to how it is that we account for ourselves. Importantly, it is not a form of responsibility that is cultivated or attained. Rather, in *responding* to our past, we are inevitably *responsible as such* (Brady, 2020c).

The Scene of the Address

It is important to acknowledge that, even in autobiographical writing, the Other is present in some way. In struggling to account for oneself, we are also struggling within the particular social normativity in which we are situated, one that must be incorporated if the account is to be intelligible (Butler, 2005). Such norms are impersonal in nature – they are not created by us as individuals, but rather, our stories are always told in a belated sense, through a 'facticity' that we have been thrown into and are inescapably situated within. Foucault refers to these as 'regimes of truth' - regimes by which we recognise ourselves, that decide what and who can be recognised, and by extension, what one can 'be'. As we have seen, the later Foucault argues

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that such norms are nevertheless negotiated with through our lived experiences. Similarly, Sartre admits that the 'we-relation' (in which we use artefacts of Others in order to express ourselves) is necessary in our accounts. In either case, we situate ourselves in relation to such norms, and in doing so, we situate ourselves in relation to our 'selves' as subject to these. This requires a level of reflexivity - a form of self-questioning where one may risk becoming unrecognisable or unintelligible, where one struggles within and against the facticity in which one is situated. This reflexivity is represented in parrhesiastic practices, and in the ways in which we might enact this through our attempts to account for ourselves more broadly.

Sartre admits that, earlier in his life, he had not quite thought about the fact that books are read by others. As he grew older, he remarks how he began to feel the 'presence' of the author in the words he was reading, their 'souls haunting the work', carried forth by another – the reader - who responds to, reinterprets, and rebirths their words. Indeed, like authors who leave behind legacies of words that are then (re)read by their audience, individuals are similarly (re)defined by others through how it is that they account for themselves. As Butler (2005) points out, the structure of the address, where norms facilitate my ability in giving an account of myself, means that there is always a vulnerability towards the Other who may (re)define us in ways over which we have no control. It is in such instances that we might understand one of the inevitable dangers of accounting for oneself – the danger of being misrecognised or concretised in such a way that it leads us into bad faith with ourselves. This 'crisis' of misrecognition need not be fatal however, since it can also inaugurate the opportunity for renewal, where our account challenges the limits of what is recognisable, and where the situation itself is potentially overturned as a result.

As Foucault (2001) points out, if we are to account for ourselves in parrhesiastic ways, we must not only accept the risks it poses to ourselves, but welcome these as a measure of our sincerity. But did Sartre write his autobiography with *this* in mind, or with an emphasis on how he wished to be portrayed such that he could attain approval or forgiveness from others? These latter motives would also be a form of bad faith, since it would allow us to defuse our anxieties in the face of being exposed, to neutralise the risk that this involves, and to actively avoid the danger of speaking freely and sincerely about oneself. And yet, as Butler (2005) argues, self-formation nevertheless exists in a relation of dependency. As we saw in Chapter 7, our existence with others is experienced in an immediate sense, and when accounting for ourselves, an 'other' is also immediately posited.

According to Foucault (2001), 'the account of myself that I give never fully expresses or carries this living self'. Might this be because the 'self' is not graspable except through a concret(ised) account one gives of oneself to the Other – the self in the 'world' that is always underpinned by uncapturable pre-reflective consciousness? Indeed, for Sartre, there is an inevitable dispossession or 'disavowal' that occurs when one puts oneself into words. In such accounts, the psychosocial self erupts, something Sartre himself seems to imply in his repeated references to his 'true self' in *Words*, usually in situations where the Other is involved in some way. And inevitably, this conception is also accompanied by a critique of imposture that Sartre (2000b, p. 53) as a child seemed to embody:

> My true self, my character and my name were in the hands of adults; I had learnt to see myself through their eyes… I was an imposter… Those bright, sunlit appearances which composed my personality gave themselves away: through a defect of being which I could neither quite understand nor stop feeling. I turned to the grown-ups, begging them to vouch my merits: I was plunging into imposture.

And yet, Sartre also appeared to have battled with this, a struggle within the very scene of address in which he was situated, in which he (2000b, p. 109) was concretised by the Other:

> I was leading two existences, both of them lies. In public, I was an imposter: the famous grandson of the well-known Charles Schweitzer; alone, I was absorbed in an imaginary fit of sulks… I had no difficulty in switching from one role to the other… Yet I was threatened: my true self was in danger of remaining those alternating lies of mine to the very end.

What was it that allowed Sartre to escape from this? Was he naïve in thinking he could ever escape fully? Perhaps. But it appears that through writing in a parrhesiastic way, he could therefore pay closer attention to the gestures or role-playing underpinning his behaviour such that they could then be interrupted, tested, called into question. This only appears to be possible when one enacts a certain parrhesiastic reflexivity about oneself and one's practice, and when one can finally account for oneself in a way that does not completely yield to certainty, fixity, and the avoidance of risk. This ongoing practice is, perhaps, the closest we can hope for in terms of being in 'good faith'. But should we trust his account? And if not, doesn't this call everything he says into question? Or does it instead require a reconceptualization of the basis for such trust? Let us turn to this question in the context of teaching.

8.5 The Beautiful Risk

Thus, autobiographies can involve parrhesiastic practices in terms of how we account for ourselves and our (past) practices. They are often confessional in nature, a way to publicise and expose ourselves towards ourselves and others. Their concern is not necessarily in figuring out a measurable causality between our actions in the past and 'who we are' now, nor testing the extent to which our accounts are accurate, given that it is unfeasible to identify precisely when we acted in a committed sense, or when we performed mere gestures. Importantly, any account of oneself is situated within a scene of address with the Other. This sense of exposure towards the Other inevitably accompanies such accounts, acting as a risk in at least two ways - self-criticism and criticism from others. There is also a danger in our tendency to offer explanations in such accounts, where the act of putting oneself into words in order to be intelligible carries with it the risk of falling into bad faith. Interestingly, this is especially true in those accounts that are technicist in nature, despite their attempts to avoid risk through an appeal to certainty. But a willingness to expose oneself to both the potential criticism and to uncertainty is a measure of sincerity. It is, perhaps, the best we can hope for in terms of being in good faith with ourselves, something that therefore opens up the possibility of account-giving in more authentic terms. In trusting such accounts, there is thus more at stake than a scientistic understanding of truth as measurable objectivity.

In teaching, however, giving an account of oneself (i.e. in terms of account*ability*) is often tied to a conception of accuracy. This in turn relates to an inherent mistrust in the ability of teachers to account for themselves in other ways. Indeed, as Biesta (2014, p. 123) remarks, this 'particular discourse begins to monopolise thinking and talking' about education in its effort to generate 'increased uniformity [and] a reduction of diversity'. As such, it is not only the discourse itself that is problematic, but the ways in which it promotes a view of teaching that is then 'repeated, promoted, and *multiplied*.' But all of this is a misconception of the possibility of accuracy understood in the reductive sense, a misconception that allows us to avoid taking stock of what is at stake in our practices, of what ultimate values are made manifest in these, and, perhaps most importantly, of what the lived experiences of being a teacher entail in light of this. This reliance on accuracy is based on a belief in the possibility of certainty in our accounts. But not only does this fail to capture the messy reality of teaching, it also leads to a form of bad faith in which anxieties around potential *un*certainties are assuaged. In order to allow teachers to give an account of themselves in other ways – and, indeed, to *trust* them to do so – an entire shift in the discourse of teaching needs to occur, one that embraces risk and uncertainty as a key component of the entire educational process (Todd 2016; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2019).

In *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, Biesta (2014) sets out to show us that risk, indeed, is inherent in educational practices, despite the difficulties in capturing this. This is because education necessarily involves an interaction between humans, where teachers and students inculcate responses from one another around a 'common world'. Education is never simply a matter of teachers moulding students to respond in *particular* ways, and since the direct correlation between 'inputs' and 'outputs' is not guaranteed, any attempt to account for this denies the extent to which both parties are inevitably responding in the classroom. In spite of this, teachers are asked to suppress risk and uncertainty in various ways. As we have seen throughout Part I, for instance, current discourses in education are so often focused on degrees of predictability, and indeed, on the stability that such an understanding of education might allow. These 'risk-adverse' discourses conceptualise risk in a negative sense, where the focus of technicist accounts of teaching is often on the efforts that have been put in place to eliminate them. But as Biesta (2014) remarks, without risk, there is simply no education. Indeed, education is not a reified product but an event centred on creating the time and space 'in which existential singularity, irreplaceability and particularity of each person can emerge through being in a responsive relationship to others and to the world' (Paolantonio, 2019, p. 604).

Interestingly, Biesta (2014, p. 123) argues that a 'lack of courage to think and act differently' in our accounts of teaching underpin this push for certainty. For him, there is something infantile about this. I am inclined to agree – and in its refusal to accept that the world cannot be put under our absolute control, there is equally a failure to accept the world *as it is*. Technicist accounts aim to reduce the world (and our interactions with it) into 'simpler' and 'easier to digest' formats. But to do so is to lose so much of the important richness and complexity of life, a loss that not only represents a form of bad faith, but a fallacy that such a reduction *can*, in fact, represent the world in the first place. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus (2005, p. 42) remarks on this:

> You describe it to me and you teach me to classify it. You enumerate its laws and in my thirst for knowledge I admit that they are true. You take apart its mechanism and my hope increases. At the final stage you teach me that this wondrous and multi-coloured universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron. All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realise then that you have been reduced to poetry.

For Biesta (2014), education cannot be accounted for in what he calls the 'strong metaphysical sense'. Rather, the 'weak existentialist sense' sees education as both an encounter and an event. This, in turn, leaves us with two choices in how we might account for such practices – either in 'essentialist' or 'existentialist' terms, a choice between 'whether we want to take the risk of life – with all the uncertainty, unpredictability, and frustration that come with it – or whether we look for certainty outside, underneath or beyond life' (Biesta, 2014, p. 17). So often, it seems, we opt for the latter. But why might this be the case? Indeed, why this *drive* for certainty unless there is something *implicitly uncertain* that underpins our experiences?

Importantly, all of this calls into question our current understandings of 'trust' and of the possibility of authenticity in our accounts. In the current climate, there is an implication that we can cultivate 'trustworthiness' in teachers through training them is specific areas of expertise (e.g. data-collection, evidence-based account-giving). By doing so, there is also an assumption that such training might allow us to cultivate a 'trustworthy person', ones whose accounts will *always* be trusted, since they will be trained to identify, measure and account for their practices in the most 'robust' ways. But isn't there something a little too easy about this – and, perhaps, even insincere? Perhaps, instead, we should think about trustworthiness in a different sense, as something we must continually put into practice, test out, examine, reflect upon. Certain policies seem to call for this continual flexibility in our accounts, and yet they

are still marked by a relentless drive for assuredness. But the measure of the ongoing practices of sincerity in our accounts would, in fact, be *uncertainty*. Whilst there may be attempts to suppress this risk in those accounts that prioritise certainty, risk is not only desirable, but necessary. And if we wish to *trust* accounts, would we appeal to those that are certain? Or would we rather appeal to those that are more sincere - a sincerity in their acceptance of the uncertainty that is part and parcel of what we do as teachers? This risk that any account of oneself might entail – being misunderstood, being unintelligible, being contradictory or paradoxical – is a risk that nevertheless signals a very different understanding of response and responsibility in teaching, one that does not deny the freedom by which individuals act upon the world.

Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019) offer a distinction between 'care' and 'expertise' models of teaching that might help to illuminate this idea further. The 'expert' model of teaching involves a pre-defined set of competencies and skills that, if correctly cultivated, can ensure that the teacher will always give the best response to situations. This model therefore relies on a degree of reliability in how to account for the practices of teaching. Indeed, pedagogy is often understood here as an 'applied science', one that assumes that 'there is *first* a body of knowledge, a set of skills, full-proof [sic] procedures… and in a *second* movement the teacher brings all this to bear on whatever situation s/he finds himself/herself in, so as to bring out the best possible outcome' (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019, p. 100). On the other hand, the 'care' model of teaching involves giving 'shape' to a particular ethos as a teacher, one that requires a 'ceaseless endeavour to cultivate and perfect oneself' in line with aesthetic practices of the self. By returning to the three parrhesiastic 'techniques' that Foucault (2001) offers at the end of his lecture series, I will thus offer some tentative suggestions for how to do this.

8.6 Parrhesiastic Techniques in Teaching

Importantly, such techniques may sound 'technical' in nature, thus fitting in well with the educational discourses I seek to critique. Importantly, however, these techniques are not meant to be prescriptive guidelines for offering a parrhesiastic account of oneself, but rather, to open up new avenues for thinking about accountability in teaching in a way that does not suppress the uncertainty and risk that giving an account involves. Let us consider each in turn.

Self-Examination

Self-examination should not be confused with 'self-evaluation' as examined in Part I. Self-examination does not rely on a narrow, assured definition of evidence. Its function is not to neutralise but to open up critical questions about what is going on, about 'who we are' as teachers, and about what is valuable in what we are doing. Self-examination involves positing an inner judge who, rather than accuse, measure or 'evaluate' (in the technical sense), simply takes stock of what has happened. Indeed, as Foucault (2001) argues, the (self-)criticism that self-examination involves is not one of guilt or shame, but instead focuses on so-called 'practical errors', and how to habituate changes in oneself in light of these.

This account of taking stock of things is, perhaps, overly rationalistic. It may not align with what it *feels* like to have an inner judge, nor account for some of the catalysts of self-examinations in educational settings. Certain crises that appears in the classroom - a disruption, a student who voices a concern that makes you question entirely what it is you are doing there together – are often the moments when we begin to examine more intensely *who we are* as a teacher, and what it is we represent. Or if not crises, then situations where lessons go well - where one is so completely immersed in the activity that they forget the time, where the lesson plan goes off track because something more important is happening. Self-examination requires a rigorous form of introspection, where one is exposed not only to others, but also to themselves. It can be harrowing and uncomfortable, but it can also be revealing. It is inherently

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risky, where we may not like what we see when we expose ourselves to an honest and sincere account of our practices. At the same time, it may allow us to re-evaluate what is at stake in what we do, calling us to respond to our practices in an ongoing sense, to take responsibility for them not simply because we are coerced into doing so, but because we believe that these practices matter in some way. Self-examination requires courage – the courage to expose oneself, to undergo the introspection by which this is possible, to confront the ways in which we behave and the extent to which we are comfortable in taking responsibility for this. But it does not have to always be so solemn. Self-deprecating humour can often provide a window into what we really think, or how we are 'presenting' ourselves to the class. Sartre's autobiography is replete with such examples.

How we go about examining ourselves in this way is difficult, particularly in the current climate of teaching that very much focuses on 'what works'. But in allowing the space for teachers to confront themselves in a parrhesiastic way, one can account for oneself in a language that is, perhaps, more amenable to – and more honest about - the messy uncertainties of the lived realities of the classroom. It is important to recognise that the 'self' that is revealed through parrhesiastic practices is one that appears on the basis of an interpretation and is not an indubitable 'fact' about who we are. It is also important to realise that, for Sartre, that 'self' does not necessarily determine how we behave – now, or indeed, in the future. Self-examination as a parrhesiastic practice involves giving an account of oneself as a 'self' in the world. In fact, the very act of self-examination is also an act that contributes to the ongoing production of that self in the world, a practice that must therefore be *continually* enacted.

Self-Diagnosis
For Foucault (2001), self-diagnosis is a matter the 'self-possession of the self'. Both Sartre and Foucault diverged greatly from their own understandings of the self, but on some level, both understood it as that which is produced by being in the world with others. It is unclear what Foucault (2001) meant by self-diagnosis exactly (or if, indeed, this was his own account or merely the description of the Ancient Greeks). For our purposes here, self-diagnosis refers to the idea that she who is undertaking this self-diagnosis is also she towards whom the examination is focused, and this both conditions and produces 'self-mastery'.

The exposure that we ourselves experience through forms of self-diagnosis can, as we have seen, be uncomfortable, but it is nevertheless a necessary component of parrhesiastic accounts of ourselves. Foucault (2001) refers to Seneca's metaphor of seasickness here. When one is undertaking a voyage at sea, one feels a certain malaise due to the 'perpetual vacillating motion which has no other movement than "rocking"' (Foucault, 2001, p. 153). This rocking motion is partly related to a lack of self-mastery over what is happening, a lack of stability that is, indeed, nauseating. But it is nevertheless an inescapable component of the journey, and because it cannot be overcome during this voyage itself, we must find a way to live with it. Sartre (2000a) famously talks about the nausea of existence, of coming to realise the contingency of the world. It is also through this nausea that one comes to realise their freedom as conscious human beings, as *not* those inanimate objects that exist superfluously. This in turn allows us to realise our *innate* self-mastery – a form of authenticity that is both liberating and anxiety-inducing.

Indeed, as we discussed in Chapter 4, although this feeling of exposure can cause anxiety, it can also dissipate as the lesson continues, as the class becomes more absorbed in what is going on. This initial feeling of exposure is testament to our freedom in front of others, a freedom in the sense that we are *always* responding in the world (with others). We are even responding in moments where it seems that we are constrained by conventions, by social norms, by the circumstances, by 'lesson plans', since all of this does not make sense *without* such freedom. In the context of teaching, self-mastery appears to be hindered by the discourses

through which one 'speaks' as a teacher, through which one describes or translates their practices to those who hold them to account. Perhaps it is also hindered by the extent to which we unquestioningly 'step into the role' of teaching, as many of us often do. And yet, teachers do not *need* to speak through these discourses. They do not need to adopt the 'language of effectiveness' in order to evaluate themselves or in order to provide descriptions or explanations for their conduct in the classroom. Through parrhesiastic acts (e.g. modelled on autobiographical writing), it is then possible for teachers to find *another* way of speaking about their practices, of giving an account of themselves and what they do in a less detached way than that which is encouraged by current forms of evidence-based accountability, one that is, rather, 'existentialist' – or, indeed, authentic - in nature.

Self-Testing

Self-testing, for Foucault (2001), is a form of self-surveillance. Foucault's (e.g. 1991) earlier work characterised self-surveillance as a way in which institutions can control not only the body of a person, but also their 'soul', where more overt forms of coercion are no longer necessary. Self-surveillance thus leads to self-discipline – a disciplining of one's behaviour and one's subjectivity in light of impersonal social norms they are conditioned by. Much of this, of course, has been accounted for in educational research, particularly in relation to high-stakes accountability regimes (e.g. Ball, 2003; Perryman, 2006)

But self-testing in a parrhesiastic sense does not seem to have this agenda in mind. Although it involves an element of self-governance, it is not a governance that leads to the unquestioning internalisation of external norms and values. Rather, self-testing can lead to a form of self-mastery, in turn allowing for a parrhesiastic relation to oneself. Sartre, of course, would not see self-mastery as an end to be attained but an innate aspect of all human beings. As we have seen throughout, his conception of freedom does not imply that we aimlessly navigate our way through life, however. This freedom is not the same as power – indeed, we are free to attempt certain actions but not necessarily to 'complete' them if those actions are outside our situated capabilities. Since we do not live aimlessly, Sartre argues that we make a so-called 'fundamental choice', as discussed in Chapter 5. This original choice underpins all other choices in our life and through it, our subsequent actions are meaningful. It provides the context for the actions we have undertaken, and thus the person we 'are' by virtue of those. Of course, we *can* go against this fundamental project, but, since doing so goes against our sense of self that has been 'produced' by our meaningful actions in the world with others, we rarely do.

Self-testing can therefore be a way in which one 'checks in' with (and potentially (re)evaluates) one's fundamental project, similar to the ongoing questioning that, for Sartre, is an implicit aspect of living more authentically (Santoni, 1995; Catalano, 1996). It is important to understand that this project is not always clear, nor is it always (if ever) possible to 'make intelligible'. When a teacher asks themselves why they entered education, or why education matters to them, they may not be able to articulate this clearly in words. They may, perhaps, offer romanticised ideas about teaching without really being honest with themselves. 'Authentic' answers, however, may be made more evident through accounting for one's practices in the classroom in a parrhesiastic way. The difficulty, however, lies in *how* we account for these. Again, our concern here is not necessarily with accuracy or truth as 'objectivity'. The problem with accounting for oneself is the reason why *Words* and other forms of engaging with oneself are often so ambiguous, especially when it comes to delineating why we behaved in certain ways, or, indeed, what our fundamental project is. And yet, perhaps there are glimpses of this initial project in how we behave. Through the technique of self-testing, perhaps such glimpses can be brought to the fore, thus allowing for a reflexivity that imbues a

relation between oneself and a more authentic – or at least sincere - account of their responses to situations.

8.7 Trusting Teachers

Sartre argues that the irresolvable issue of bad faith arises because of the nature of faith itself. Faith is inherently paradoxical – it holds us in a position where we both believe and *not* believe since, in faith, we *know* that we *cannot know* for certain that what we believe is true. In the same way, there is something paradoxical about how we account for ourselves, our attempts to be frank and sincere knowing that the explanations themselves are taken on faith. Much of these accounts we offer must therefore be taken on faith, or indeed, 'trust' – the trust that is directed at teachers from the wider public who hold them accountable, and the trust that is directed towards ourselves. This is not a trust that is cultivated on the basis of certain capacities to be 'accurate' in one's account (for example, through being 'data-literate'). Indeed, such epistemological questions are inappropriate in such discussions (Standish, 2020), and they are in many ways impossible to account for. Rather, trust understood here is akin to how we meet people on a personal level - a trust in one's ability to use their own language to talk about their own practices - in short, to account for themselves *on their own terms*. Trust is, of course, risky, but it is an intimate part of what we do as humans. Unless we think of teaching as a purely technical endeavour that can avoid risk at all costs, then isn't trust also something we must risk placing in accounts of teaching that do not appeal to 'measurable evidence'? With this in mind, let us now turn to the final chapter of the thesis where we continue to consider what an 'existentialist' account of teaching might look like over and against the 'technicist' accounts that are exemplified in Part I, starting from my *own* account of the messy but rich experiences of being a teacher.

9

Towards an Existentialist Account of Teaching

9.1 An Anecdotal Account

When I was 19, I entered my first secondary school classroom as a teacher. I had done some work in primary schools before then, but this felt entirely different. For one, most of the students looked to be about the same age as me. I had been at university for about two years at that stage. I had studied lots of pedagogical strategies and tips, and like many teachers, I had a fairly good idea of what these different strategies meant and what they hoped to achieve. But I'm not sure how explicit they were in my thinking once I began to speak in front of the class. I had carefully planned my lesson beforehand, writing out neatly what I was going to do, how long each activity was going to take, what sort of approaches I would incorporate and why. This wasn't because I was particularly organised, but because it was needed for my teaching portfolio submitted at the end of my placement. These plans offered me a sense of security, however, and I continued writing them even when I didn't need to, just as a precaution in case I completely forgot what I was there to do – a worry that, of course, never materialised.

The feeling I had when walking into the classroom for the first time wasn't one of excitement or hopefulness. It wasn't exactly anxiety either, except when I allowed myself to overthink what might or might not happen, or when I paid too much attention to that slight feeling of tightness in my stomach. Rather, it was a strangeness that I felt - something to do with the idea that I would adopt a role I had witnessed in the many years of my schooling, that these students were going to be looking at me in the same way that I had looked upon my past teachers – indeed, that I would appear to them *as a teacher*. It was strange to think that, as soon as the students walked into the room, I would immediately be recognised as a teacher, and that if I appeared in another room in another building with other strangers, I wouldn't get the same response. I had certainly dressed for the occasion. Looking back, it was clear that I had in my mind what *my* teachers used to wear, and the clothes I wore were just used for teaching, as if I needed those clothes in order to appear 'teacherly'.

I remember that I stood at the front of the class and wrote my name on the board. I imagined that scene from *Freedom Writers* where Erin Grunwell accidentally wipes the chalk on her backside, making the students laugh at her. I was careful not to repeat the same mistake. I had completely forgotten that strategy of somehow writing on the board in a straight line without having your back to the students (something I still cannot manage today). I later learned why there was so much emphasis on this in my training. As soon as I looked away, it was as if a whole other group of people would appear behind me. We were all playing a kind of game, where no one was really being sincere with each other – me trying my best to appear 'teacherly', the students trying their best to look *just* serious enough so as not to appear mischievous, but *just* mischievous enough so as not to not appear overly serious. When I looked away, I could sense their quickened moves, the way they threw glances at each other, the stifled

whispers, the crumpled paper as it flew through the air, some of the students looking on at those 'class clowns' and sniggering awkwardly, others petulantly annoyed. Often, the charade was difficult to keep up. A student would say something funny but inappropriate, and I would have a really hard time trying not to laugh. I'm not sure why I *didn't* just laugh, but instead, I had the same feeling as when you're trying not to laugh at a funeral, where suppressing it seems to make things even more irresistibly funny, though you're not quite sure why.

Once the students arrived in the room, I knew I had to just start, that I would most certainly feel less awkward than if I just stood there. So, I briefly introduced myself and the topic we were all here to look at. I seemed to be somewhat unconsciously enacting the idea that you shouldn't smile before Christmas, something I held onto quite steadfastly in my earlier years. I most certainly did not command much respect in any immediate sense – I'm not sure I did for the whole time I was there. The students were 'harmless', though cheeky and disruptive. They came up with fake names. They talked over me about irrelevant topics. I even had another teacher walk in and loudly say that she thought there wasn't 'anyone' in the room (ironic given that she could clearly hear the students in the hall – of course, by 'anyone', she meant a teacher). I had expected this to a degree – I used to be one of those students, and the university was very thorough about preparing us for this. They made it sound almost like a secret rite of passage, one that was difficult to explain but would be understood more fully once we had gone through it ourselves. I remember afterwards that I felt immensely shameful of how it was that I used to behave in class. But in that moment, I just pressed on as best I could, hypervigilant of myself as a body standing in front of others, with this anonymous crowd looking at me, evaluating to what extent I would live up to the image of the 'trainee teacher' in their minds. When the class finally ended, I felt a sense of relief. I realise that much of what I like about teaching is that feeling, in fact – not a relief that it is over, or that I could finally be 'myself' again, but a relief that it went well, that we did something that mattered on some level.

During the lesson, I found myself parroting phrases that teachers used to say to me, mimicking their gestures. All of these intricate habits were not only premised on representations of teaching that I had come across, but also because of the ways in which I imagined that I was *seen* by the students, and my interpretation of what I needed to do in order to *seen as* 'teacherly'. I had entered in the room as the category of 'teacher', and with that, all of the expectations that are attached – for some students, a knowledgeable, older other who had life experience and subject expertise; for others, an undeserving authority figure, who really only wanted a group of people to boss around. Rightly or wrongly, I implicitly *felt* that this was the way I was being looked at, and because of that, I unthinkingly inhabited the role that was in part defined by my own experience of being a student, by what I had learned in university, by teachers I had seen in films. It wasn't that I *couldn't* have acted in any other way. It was that I was so absorbed in 'myself as a body' in that moment that I didn't really think of myself as responding to the situation. Of course, I *was* responding, and I *am responding to it now*. Is it even possible to know with any certainty the meaning behind my gestures in the classroom, or the extent to which I was sincere about what I felt? I may write about it retrospectively as if that is the case, because I know on some level that teachers *should* be sincere about what they do. But teaching is something I came to value much later in life. Despite what I felt about it then, it's difficult for me to not think about my early years as valuable or formative or even profound in some small way.

When I watch TV documentaries or films about teaching today, especially those centred on teachers just starting out, I get mixed feelings. On the one hand, I find it quite moving to see teachers on screen because I recognise myself in those moments. But I also know that there is an undeniable voyeurism perpetuated by these shows. I'm not always convinced by how the teacher is represented, nor the fact that the show invites armchair judgements from an anonymous crowd of onlookers, judgements that are not necessarily spontaneous but are

cultivated through the manipulation of equally anonymous directors and editors. There is something potentially harmful in these overly romanticised ideas about teaching in fictional films like 'Dead Poet's Society', 'Freedom Writers', perhaps even comedies like 'School of Rock' and 'Sister Act'. I have also noticed an increase in TV 'documentaries' about schools that work in the same way – the 'fly on the wall' look at the classroom, the trials and tribulations of being a teacher in today's world, the important *and* (eventually) rewarding task that teaching is. Their narrative is recipe-like. The teacher enters the classroom for the first time, overly optimistic about what can be achieved. Confronted with stereotypically 'difficult' students who do not share their perkiness, contestation continues until, on the brink of breaking point, the students finally see that the teacher *does* care about them, and that what they are teaching them is relevant to their lives. But in my experience, teaching was always much more like Sisyphus pushing that rock up the mountain only to watch it fall back down. For Camus, Sisyphus is heroic in his ability to recognise this absurdity but to keep going despite this. Is this, perhaps, where the 'heroism' of teaching lies?

There is one example that particularly springs to mind for me – an episode from 'Tough Young Teachers' (BBC Three, 2014)[1]. In one scene, we see Claudenia, a trainee science teacher, trying to enact what she imagined would be an effective strategy to demonstrate the phenomenon of sound. Claudenia is attempting something 'whacky' (according to the programme's narrator), involving a select number of students standing in front of their peers and re-enacting how sound vibrates and travels from its point of origin to its receiver. Now displaced from their usual spots behind their desks, the students start to act up. They are clearly frustrated, as indicated by one student who remarks that the task 'didn't make no sense', and with another accusing Claudenia of '[making them] look like idiots'. Claudenia, in turn, becomes visibly frustrated herself. She tries to power through, but ultimately caves into her perceived failure of the situation, and the awkwardness becomes all the more palpable when the students start to mockingly applaud her and their peers for their effort. At one point, another teacher, Mr. McDonald, enters the classroom to check if Claudenia is having any problems. Through his 'death stare', he manages to force the attention of some of the students. But this is only momentary victory, since once he leaves, things go back to how they were. It's likely that Claudenia felt even more awkward given that he had (unintentionally) undermined her authority even further.[2] The scene ends with Claudenia visibly upset, stumbling over her words as she asks the students to pack up, later telling a colleague that she doesn't know what she is doing, and that the students also do not know what she is doing. She then relegates the entire lesson as a waste of everyone's time.

The scene is particularly poignant given that, the day before, Claudenia experienced a really great teaching moment, where she also tried something 'whacky' (filling balloons with different gases and putting a flame next to them so the students could hear the different 'explosions'). She was excited, the students were excited, and even another teacher who walked in when she heard the 'racket' in the hall, like Mr McDonald had, *also* appeared to be excited. But such are the highs and the lows of teaching, the uncertainty of how each lesson will pan out despite our best planning efforts and ideas, of how we will feel about ourselves afterwards, and the need to press on regardless of all of this. In that sense, Sisyphus may feel a momentary

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[1] 'Tough Young Teachers' follows the lives of trainee teachers undergoing their 'Teach First' placements in the UK.

[2] It is important to mention that Claudenia is not just a young, inexperienced teacher but also a black female in a subject that, traditionally, both women and BME teachers are underrepresented in. The fact that Mr McDonald is a white older male might also have something to do with the automatic respect he seemed to generate. This is, of course, a belated explanation for the students' behaviour, but it nevertheless points to the idea that our relationship with others in part depends on the ways in which we are characterised by virtue of our race, gender, and 'place' within a particular subject area.

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relief when he lets go the rock, but his true heroism is in the way that he continues to push it back up that mountain.

Analysing Accounts

> She explained to me that a suitably programmed computer can read a novel in a few minutes and record the list of all the words contained in the text, in order of frequency. "That way I can have an already completed reading at hand," Lotaria says, "with an incalculable saving of time. What is the reading of a text, in fact, except the recording of certain thematic recurrences, certain insistences of forms and meanings? An electronic reading supplies me with a list of the frequencies, which I have only to glance at to form an idea of the problems the book suggests in my critical study. Naturally, at the highest frequencies the list records countless articles, pronouns, particles, but I don't pay them any attention. I head straight for the words with the richest meaning; they can give me a fairly precise notion of the book."

This passage from Calvino's (1992, p. 186) novel, *If on a Winter's Night A Traveller* concerns Lotaria, a student of literature, employing what might be called a 'technicist' method for reading an account (in this case, a novel). Lotaria, it seems, understands the 'true meaning' of an account as correlating to the frequency of repeated words. In doing so, she is undeniably missing out on much of the nuance and depth that reading the narrative as a whole has to offer. In reducing the text to frequencies of words, she is also narrowing her field of vision such that these wider and more implicit complexities are taken out of frame. This is akin to looking through a microscope, which 'effectively downgrades or even erases the embeddedness that is a feature of our normal experience of the world… [prioritising] what can be made explicit and in effect [denying] the ineffable' (Blake *et al.*, 2000, p. 7). Indeed, the very technology she employs – the computer as well as the method itself - changes not only the meaning of the story but also the very nature of what it means for her *engage* with an account, where it is the computer rather than the reader that generates the criteria for truth and meaning in the story.

At a later point in the novel, the writer, Silas, with whom Lotaria shares her 'method', accounts for the self-consciousness that this revelation makes him feel:

> The idea that Lotaria reads my books in this way creates some problems for me. Now, every time I write a word, I see it spun around by the electronic brain, ranked according to its frequency, next to other words whose identity I cannot know, and so I wonder how many times I have used it, I feel the whole responsibility of writing weigh on those isolated syllables, I try to imagine what conclusions can be drawn from the fact that I have used this word once or fifty times. Maybe it would be better for me to erase it… But whatever other word I try to use seems unable to withstand the test… Perhaps instead of a book I could write a list of words, in alphabetical order, an avalanche of isolated words which expresses that truth I still do not know, and from which the computer, reversing its program, could construct the book, my book (Calvino, 1992, pp. 188-189).

In what sense does Silas represent an anxiety of performativity that account-giving might invite on the part of account-givers expected to employ technicist norms of communication? To what extent do we rely on these mechanisms to reveal the 'truth' of what we do, much as Silas relies on the technology to construct the meaning of his book? And to what extent might this alienate us from what we experience, and from our attempts to capture this *in our own terms*? Much as Silas' approach to account-giving is also altered by the ways in which he suspects his novel will be 'received', account-giving teachers also alter their accounts along the same lines.

Of course, I wrote my anecdote at the beginning of this chapter knowing that it was going to be read, and I most likely would have not written it in that way had I known that parents, or inspectors, or even students would be the ones reading it. Perhaps it may have looked more like the 'best practice' example taken from the *School Self-Evaluation* website

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(Figure 8.1) below. In this sense, when one offers an account, there seems to be an inevitable 'performativity' involved, given that any account is offered within a scene of address.

Figure 8.1: Best Practice Example from the School Self-Evaluation Website (DES, 2016g, p. 4):

Teachers' practice

- At a staff meeting in August 2013 the whole staff reflected on teaching and learning using the SSE guidelines under the three themes learner outcomes (pages 30 & 31), learning experiences (student's engagement in learning – pages 34 & 35) and teachers' practice (teaching approaches – pages 40 & 41). The whole staff then used the overview of good practice on page 25 to reach a consensus on strengths, areas for improvement and priorities for action and recorded this on the staff reflection sheet on page 84 of the SSE guidelines. Based on this feedback, the core team designed a survey on teaching approaches and this was administered on-line using google forms (see appendix 2). After analysis of both the teacher & student survey by the whole staff at a meeting in September 2013, an anomaly appeared in relation to pair/group work, so all staff agreed to use a rubric designed by the core team for self-assessment of their teacher practice in relation to group work. Staff also agreed that it made sense to look at the key skills communicating and working with others as they tie in very well with the current focus on literacy. Consequently as part of subject department planning, teachers agreed to audit their teaching approaches through the lens of these key skills using a template provided by PDST (see appendix 3).

Not only this, but the account itself was certainly influenced by ideas garnered from my engagement with Sartre, and as such, there are Sartrian 'themes' that may be abstracted from the text and analysed in a similar way to how Lotaria 'reads' novels. The account I offered was also produced *because* of my engagement with Sartre, and if I were to account for the same experience years ago, it would most likely look very different. Perhaps, since I have now acquired new theoretical, philosophical and linguistic lenses, I am therefore better equipped in offering a more robust account of my practices, of myself, and of others in the classroom. Perhaps Sartre's theory allows me access to previously unarticulated aspects of classroom practices. Whilst the account I offer in my anecdote is not supported by what might count as 'evidence', it may nevertheless be seen as an improvement from the account I *would* have offered as an inexperienced teacher unacquainted with theoretical understandings of my practice. Arguably, this same logic exists in the 'capacity-building' agenda of school self-evaluation. But on what basis is one account better or worse than others?

In one sense, the ability to 'distance' myself from my practices through an application of theory therefore allows me to formulate a more 'objective' account of them. This is very much what is implied in both school self-evaluation and, indeed, in more technicist forms of account-giving. These methods therefore serve to narrow my focus on what seemingly suppresses the 'subjective' in my account, focusing instead on what is explicit and measurable.[3] And yet, even though Lotaria's method seems to invite this 'detachment' of the reader, the 'objective/subjective' divide this implies cannot be sustained. The method itself and her choice to use it inevitably reflects certain values – the importance of efficiency and simplicity, or perhaps of the need to remove 'reader bias' from the account such as to focus solely on what the writer said. Nevertheless, Lotaria's method might invite an assumption that what she is doing is more akin to a 'factual' endeavour, one that replaces human responses to stories with an automated technology that accesses and presents the 'brute' information in the text. Whilst extreme, it is more akin to what is expected of technicist accounts of teaching. In order to think

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[3] Of course, my use of Sartre might be thought of in the same way - *because* of Sartre, I now focus on aspects of my practice that would have not been brought to light had I engaged with another thinker. I do not wish to deny that the anecdotal account I offer is latent with existentialist underpinnings. But as mentioned, Sartre serves as a 'touchstone' for *engaging* with my practices, and not for explaining them.

about this further, let us examine more closely the differences between this and 'existentialist' accounts.

9.2 Technicist Accounts

As we have explored in the first two chapters, the ways in which teaching is accounted for in self-evaluation discourses might be called 'technicist', in part due to the conceptualisation of teaching as that which can be analysed in explicit ways through the collection and examination of 'data'. As Biesta (2007; 2014; 2017) and others have argued, the over-emphasis on teaching as a measurable activity brings about a 'technological model of professional action'. This involves only considering instrumental values in educational evaluation without the more ultimate ones that underpin why we educate in the first place, or which interventions may be considered desirable. Technicist accounts are broadly associated with the wider discourse of scientism that has pervaded the educational sphere in recent years (e.g. Halliday, 1998; Johnson, 2014; Mooney Simmie *et al.*, 2017), as caricatured in reference to Lotaria's method for reading. Scientism focuses on the reduction of lived experience to what is calculable and most efficiently monitored and directed, employing mechanistic techniques to evaluate practices (Kneller, 1958). As we saw in Chapter 3, the existentialist movement in part sought to address this, particularly the assumption that lived experience *can* be neatly categorised and explained through direct and explicit forms of observation and analysis. Ultimately, technicist models fail to recognise that there is always a pre-reflective 'valuation' in every situation, where the meaning of that situation is *already* informed by one's fundamental project, and that what we pinpoint as educationally '(in)effective' hinges upon this – both as the writer and as the reader of accounts.

As explored in Chapter 2, the *Self-Evaluation Guidelines* seek to provide a language that perpetuates a scientistic conception of teaching, where statements of effective practice serve not only as benchmarks against which teaching can be measured, but are also actively and continuously recycled within the accounts of teaching themselves. The report in Figure 8.1 (and the 'Teacher Questionnaire' and 'Rubric' in Appendices 1 and 2) serve as good examples of this, where although the account was written by an individual school, much of the language employed comes directly from the guidelines. Just as Silas' reaction to Lotaria represents, these methods for account-giving also affect the practice of teaching itself. By making the teacher attuned to what counts as '(in)effective' in her practice, and by encouraging her to focus her accounts solely on explicit correlations with standards of effective practice, her classroom conduct is also impacted. Thus, in attempting to disrupt technicism in teaching, we must examine not only the content of self-evaluation policies, but also the ways in which they affect both the accounts of teaching as well as its practices, demonstrating the difficulties in offering an alternative account where such expectations are imposed.

Language and Accuracy

As we explored in Chapter 3, the language of self-evaluation policy is clear, coherent and neat, and in order to achieve this, a reduction in its descriptions of teaching is apparent. This is perceived as necessary in part to ensure that these descriptions are standardised. In Part I, we explored how this language is couched within a 'school effectiveness' discourse and driven by the principles of evidence-based research. Ultimately, one of the aims of *School Self-Evaluation* policy is to develop 'data literacy' in staff such that they can provide more robust accounts of their own strengths and weaknesses, and to set targets for improvement. Since this technicist language certainly seems to lead to more efficient and simplified ways of recognising and accounting for effective practice, it simultaneously becomes hierarchised as the most accurate form of accounting for one's practices more broadly.

Nevertheless, it harbours a number of problematic assumptions. As explored in Chapter 5, for example, it relies on a dichotomy between 'objective' and 'subjective', premised on a broader separation of 'fact' and 'value'. Such dualisms are not present in the lived experiences of self-evaluation, where any account that I give of my situation is *already* framed by particular values, and this affects both the account that is offered as well as my interpretation of the so-called 'data' I use to do so. In self-evaluation, the teacher is expected to detach herself from her practice by assuming the role of 'evaluator'. For Sartre, the self that is analysed in this context is the self 'in the world', i.e. the self that is produced by our ongoing responses to situations. This self 'under evaluation' is thus also produced in part through the evaluation itself. But the assumption that a teacher can somehow separate herself from her practice through the 'objective' use of evidence is a fallacy, since it fails to account for the fact that she is inevitably implicated in the process of evaluation itself. In fact, the teacher *produces* herself as 'an (in)effective teacher' through the accounts of her practice she gives. It is not the case that this category pre-existed the evaluation and was thus identified through some form of 'objective' apprehension of the brute facts of the situation that presented themselves to her. In other words, her very identification of what is (in)effective came about *because* she was implicated in the process, a process that in turn produces her 'self' in as a particular kind of teacher.

And yet, the technicist model of accounting for practices denies this, and is instead premised on a debased understanding of 'truth as accuracy' – i.e. that truth is what corresponds to the apprehension of 'brute facts' without the presence of 'subjective bias/values'. Even though this in itself is misguided, it nevertheless functions such as to narrow the focus of account-giving only on that which is amendable to measurement, and therefore explicit in practices. In doing so, it puts the more implicit aspects of lived experiences out of focus. As explored in Chapter 5, these may include our encounter with absence as an intimate aspect of the 'questioning attitude' (and therefore freedom) at our core, or the pre-reflective ways in which we exist in the world in relation to ourselves and others. It also includes the values that are embedded in our decision-making, and the fact that we are *always* deciding on, interpreting and responding to the situation we are thrown into - responses that, in fact, bring the very situation to light. Moreover, technicist account-giving denies the extent to which our explanations of these situations are always *after the fact*, that they are constructed in order to explain experiences that have already taken place, and yet are not necessarily present in the moments that initially moved us to act. But as explored in Chapter 8, there is always an unavoidable 'fictionalisation' in any account that we give. This, in turn, calls into question the ideal of 'absolute accuracy' in accounts, signalling instead a form of account-giving that is more amenable to uncertainty, and perhaps, authenticity.[4]

The Disposition of Account-Giving
Self-evaluation policies imply that giving an accurate account of one's practices is not something that comes 'naturally' to teachers. Rather, account-giving in this sense is ultimately a cultivated disposition (Peterson, 2016). Key to this cultivation is the initiation into particular norms of communication – the so-called 'language of evaluation' (DES, 2016b) that seemingly allows for more robust, evidence-based accounts. Conventionally speaking, dispositions not only function as explanations for behaviour, but also allow us to predict (and direct) future

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[4] Of course, this is not to suggest that we should *never* be concerned with accuracy in accounts, nor that all accounts are of equal merit along these lines. It does not suggest that accuracy cannot be 'approached', nor that accounts should not be open to interrogation, particularly when there are high stakes involved. But for such concerns to be part of the conversation, the instrumental value of those accounts needs to be considered – i.e. what those accounts are for, and what they seek to capture in light of this. In the case of accounting for teaching, perhaps accuracy is not the ultimate aim.

action. The basic idea behind the cultivating dispositions is premised on this – that if a person is equipped with a 'reflective' disposition, they are more likely to recognise (in)effective practices and act on them accordingly, both now and in the future. Importantly, since dispositions are intimately connected to the way that a person is, cultivating them is not merely about cultivating desirable behaviour. It is also about cultivating *desirable persons*.

Sartre, however, offers us another lens. For him, dispositions *do* relate to the ways that people act. But rather than determining who that person 'is' or 'will be', they are constructed *on the basis of* actions, which in turn, *produces* that person as being disposed in particular ways. Indeed, a person may be led to believe that they have certain dispositions by reflecting on how they have behaved. Perhaps I am more disposed towards thinking of myself in terms of others, hence the reason why I seem to feel so exposed in my account of classroom experiences. Perhaps this disposition explains other areas of my lived experience – I am terribly performative on first dates, I am (and always will be) afraid of public speaking, and so on. But the 'assignment' of a disposition functions as an explanation of why I behave the way that I do after the fact - they are not constituted by some objective structure of meaning in the world that defines and determines 'who I am'. Such definitions, in fact, only come about via my interpretation of the situation, an interpretation which in turn produces this sense of self as disposed in particular ways. This, as we have seen, can also lead to a form of bad faith where I limit myself in acting otherwise, using the 'excuse' of my disposition to avoid taking responsibility for the direction of my future behaviour. But this interpretation is nevertheless underpinned by a more fundamental form of intentionality – i.e. pre-reflective consciousness as the 'lack' which means that I am, in fact, fundamentally *without* such an essence.

What is dangerous about this line of thinking is, again, the ways in which it narrows our focus and thus limits the extent to which we may account for ourselves in another way. In Chapter 6, we considered the ways in which institutional bad faith might do this - for example, in implicitly understanding teachers as objects of analysis, as predictable and as malleable in line with standards of effective practice. In self-evaluation, those responsible for such malleability are, in fact, the teachers themselves, and they are thus tasked with accounting for themselves in such a way as to achieve this. This is the reason why self-evaluation aims at cultivating a specific *kind* of account-giving – one that engages with evidence, that refer to statements of effective practice, and that ultimately encourages teachers to understand themselves in these same essentialist ways. And yet, this denies the extent to which teachers are present as subjects in both the classroom *and* in their accounts - as *beings-for-themselves* with a fundamental 'lack' that makes the classroom appear meaningful in a particular way, and as thus 'beyond' any definition or category that is assigned to them either by others or by themselves.

Fundamentally, however, teaching is an affective rather than a 'technical' profession. In this sense, it is difficult to simply 'discard' the role and experiences of being a teacher once one exits the classroom.[5] I may have had to work hard at maintaining the particular 'image' of being a teacher in front of my students, to step into the role such that I might be seen as 'teacherly'. The very struggle to not let my guard down in front of students, however, indicates that when I stand in front of that class, my entire personhood is on display: my 'self' in the world, defined by others in ways over which I have no control, but which may later come to be how I define myself as a teacher *and* as a person. In this sense, the teacher is *already* more than the role itself, despite the attempts to suppress this in technicist modes of account-giving.

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[5] This is perhaps also true of the waiter in Sartre's example of 'bad faith'. Indeed, the waiter was also *already* exposed as a person, despite his attempts to suppress this through enacting exactly what he believed his 'role' required. This is what makes the role so difficult to sustain – for example, when confronted by a rude customer, it is difficult to maintain composure in the way that waiters 'are supposed to'. Waitering also involves a sense of vulnerability, one that Sartre does not seem to appreciate in his example.

Cultivated Distrust?

As touched upon in the last part of Chapter 8, the concept of 'trust' works in a similar way to (bad) faith. Of course, trust is not inherently bad – in fact, it is very much a necessary component of navigating our existence, much like 'bad faith' in many respects. But there *are* problematic examples of trust. Trusting can sometimes mean 'resigning' ourselves to situations, a trust that therefore tempers anxiety when faced with the fundamental responsibility of *responding*. Trust in the educational context implies this – for example, we can trust a teacher's judgement about herself if she uses adequate forms of evidence, an approach that in some ways pacifies the anxiety we might feel about letting her make so-called 'subjective' judgements. In Calvino's novel, perhaps Silas' anxiety of being exposed to the Other can be tempered by allowing the computer to 'construct' his account. Teachers may think in similar ways about their *own* accounts of effective practice. All of this, of course, fails to take into account that the evidence, and the situations it seeks to describe, comes to light because of the teacher and her fundamental values.

As we saw in Chapter 8, trust in the educational context is not the kind of trust that is understood in a more everyday sense, the latter of which inevitably involves risk and uncertainty. Rather, it is a trust that is cultivated on the basis of 'accuracy' in accounts. So, whilst measurement culture in schools is thought to exemplify a *lack* of trust (e.g. McNamara and O'Hara, 2008), it is simultaneously a redefinition of what is (un)trustworthy. Much like bad faith, this kind of trust is a project that must be continually willed into existence. For Sartre, bad faith is possible because of its peculiar 'non-persuasive evidence' – evidence that is questionable to begin with, but that later becomes the premise upon which we believe in something, such that the evidence that underpins our belief in the first place enters to the 'background' of our thinking. This makes us unaware of the extent to which we *are* in bad faith, thus allowing bad faith to endure. Technicist accounts and their related capacity-building agenda may be said to operate in the same way. They begin by offering clear accounts of teaching, accounts that are portrayed as 'trustworthy' because they are based on evidence. Despite such evidence being questionable in the first place, it nevertheless forms the basis of 'profiles' against which teachers measure their effectiveness. These 'trustworthy' profiles of effective practice then function as *further* evidence upon which the account must be based. Paradoxically, however, this kind of trust is willed into existence *on the basis of questionable evidence*. In order to expose this, there therefore needs to be a disruption of sorts, one that not only calls into question profiles of effective practice but also the centrality of this kind of 'technicist' trust, instead pointing to the inescapable complexity of the very concept of trust itself.

Sartre's account of psychoanalysis offers an analogy that illuminates the implications of this kind of (technicist) trust. As we saw in Chapter 6, psychoanalysis understands the patient as someone who does not know their own drives and dispositions. Rather, these dispositions can only be identified by another who 'accesses' them in part by observing to their behaviour. The patient therefore requires a 'technician' (i.e. the psychoanalyst) to act as a mediator between those dispositions and himself. For Sartre, the issue is seeing these dispositions as innate rather than as another's interpretation of 'me' in the world. Their account is not necessarily (more) accurate (in the sense that it might more or less correspond to brute facts about a person), but rather, it is purely the Other's own response to the situation in which I appear, a situation brought to light by their fundamental projects. And yet, I become more and more reliant on the psychoanalyst for the purpose of understanding myself, and I increasingly distrust my *own* intuitions. Analogously, one could argue that teachers who are embroiled within the technicist understanding of trust in institutional settings therefore experience a similar kind of *cultivated distrust* – of their own intuitions, of their own judgements, and

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indeed, of their ability to give an account of these on their own terms. But if we were to reconceptualise trust – a trust based on an ongoing pursuit to be *sincere* with ourselves rather than a pursuit of some debased sense of accuracy as certainty - might this then call for a shift in the discourse, not only in terms of how we describe and measure teaching, but also in how we account for it?

9.3 Towards an Existentialist Account
Importantly, it is not that an existentialist account is more 'accurate' than the technicist model. In fact, an existentialist model of account-giving is inherently flawed if we are to evaluate it in this way. Where it *does* differ is in its efforts to capture more fully the lived experiences of being a teacher. In many ways, it seeks to emulate the acts of parrhesia discussed in Chapter 8, where it understands risk and uncertainty as key components in the process of account-giving. This risk arises because of the inherent 'fictionalisation' that account-giving involves, but also because of the frankness and sincerity it requires, through which we continually situate ourselves in relation to the 'truth' of such accounts *even* if that means opening ourselves up to (self-)criticism. Existentialist account-giving, in this sense, requires courage. At the same time, there is no set 'product' or 'endpoint' for such accounts. Rather, they are ongoing practices, much like parrhesiastic practices involved in caring for oneself.

One might be tempted to say that this form of account-giving is the kind found in narrative research - certainly, there are similarities between both approaches. Narrative research also focuses on lived experiences. Its concern is not with the 'factuality' of stories, but instead with how individuals organise and understand their own experiences through the accounts they give (Ricoeur, as cited in Josselson, 2012). In this sense, narrative research tends to focus more so on describing experiences rather than predicting or measuring their outcomes, with an emphasis on meaning-making rather than causation, interpretation rather than the more 'hard-lined' forms of analysis (Josselson, 2012; Kraatila, 2019). Narrative researchers start from the viewpoint that the individual is embedded within historical, cultural and social contexts. Since individual accounts exist within these webs of wider connected narratives, the role of the researcher is to disentangle these, often with a means to understand how the participant's self-identity is formed in response to narratives imposed from the outside (Moen, 2006). Narrative research thus endeavours to capture human complexity in each situation, to interpretively account for varied perspectives in light of context, knowing that these accounts will differ depending on who is recounting, and indeed who is interpreting such stories (Josselson, 2012).

For some narrative researchers, human existence is 'rendered meaningful' (Ricoeur, as cited in Polkinghorne, 1998) through account-giving, such that it is then open to more direct forms of observation. Of course, what is observed has already been 'selected' by those giving the account and is therefore already infused with meaning. The researcher looks for 'patterns' of meaning in what participants say, piecing together 'data' in order to connect what may seem to be unrelated aspects of the story – ultimately, to make what is invisible apparent (Josselson, 2012). Although it involves an attempt to see the events recounted from the perspective of the story-teller, narrative researchers also recognise the role that the researcher plays in this process – i.e. that the story recounted exists under their gaze and is informed by their research project. This means that the researcher is also sensitive to the performativity of participants as well as their own positionality as researchers, where the meaning of the story is 'filtered through [their] mind' (Josselson, 2012, p. 5). This is often seen as something to be suppressed, however, with some authors (e.g. Moen, 2006) suggesting that the systematic deployment theory allows for the necessary distance between the researcher and their object of study.

Undoubtably, there are various kinds of narrative research, and with that, much discussion around how to assess the quality of narrative projects, as well as the systematic

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robustness of the methodology itself (e.g. Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002; Fraser, 2004; Atkinson and Delamont, 2006; Polkinghorne, 2007; Josselson, 2007; 2012). Whilst not the same as the aforementioned debased sense of 'accuracy', there is nevertheless a tendency to explain and to evaluate narratives with the assumption that, on some level, *a priori* explanations *can* be uncovered, i.e. the original motivations of the account-giver for both the ways in which they behaved and the ways in which they have interpreted this behaviour in their accounts. Indeed, there are attempts to ensure the 'correctness' of the stories told (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006; Björninen, 2019; Kraatila, 2019), and to therefore remove researcher bias as much as possible. This involves not only paying attention to the account itself, but the implicit reasoning that may be 'invisible' to account-giver but apparent to the researcher. In light of this, some (e.g. Phillips, 1997) have even argued that the outsider's interpretation is often *more* accurate because storytellers are not always aware of or honest about the meaning they apply retrospectively to event, provided the researcher is able to lay their assumptions and biases bare. Indeed, there are several steps that make the process of narrative inquiry more or less correct, systematic and rigorous, with the assumption that certain explanations are closer to the truth than others, and that certain positions allow us to 'see' explanations in a more or less objective way. Importantly, these positions are demarcated by the capacity to apply a theoretical lens in one's analysis of an event (Moen, 2006). For instance, the narrative that I offer at the start might be seen as more 'rigorous' given the theoretical framework I am now able to apply, since this means that I am therefore better equipped in understanding and in explaining my own past experiences at an 'objective' distance.

Although narrative research thus recognises the 'fictionalisation' in account-giving, its aim is to navigate this by finding ways in which to 'detach' oneself as the analyst of the story. In doing so, it therefore represents an attempt to suppress or perhaps overcome fictionalisation and uncertainty (much like in Sartre's understanding of psychoanalysis) rather than accepting it as an inherent part of the process. All of this seems reasonable, but it is distinct from the approach that I would like to take here. Ultimately, exploring the possibility of existentialist account-giving should not be understood as offering a methodology for doing so. Indeed, the anecdote that I offer at the start of this chapter, as well as the account offered by Sartre in *Words*, should not be thought of as a blueprint for account-giving, since this implies that pre-defined steps or criteria need to be in place in order to ensure that accounts are 'existentially robust', with explicit rules that are more likely implemented by those with some kind of training in 'existentialist thinking'. Not only this, but there are all sorts of ways that accounts seem to inevitably go *against* what might be deemed as 'existentialist' – my tendency to explain why I behaved the way that I did in the anecdote, for instance. Would it even be possible to suspend this tendency, either as the writer or the reader of an account?

Existentialist account-giving is fundamentally a *process* by which an account is offered, where the resulting account is continually (re)engaged with rather than a fixed 'product' that is measured against pre-set benchmarks. Partly, this makes it difficult to think of the account purely in terms of accuracy, since it implies an ongoing openness that such certainty would not allow. Perhaps it may be thought of in terms of the more everyday sense of recounting an event, something that is inevitably accompanied by irresolvable complexities, uncertainties, paradoxes, and, of course, risk. In this sense, its measure is not exactness but affectivity, where revisited accounts may change, for instance, not because the past itself has changed, but because our responses to the past are never entirely 'fixed'. Instead of aiming at producing harmony between the 'life as lived and experienced and life as told and rendered in text' (Goodson, 1992, as cited in Moen, 2006, p. 62), existentialist accounts are examples (and perhaps also the means) by which we navigate these complexities *without* necessarily resolving them, such as they are irresolvable in lived experience. The purpose is instead to demonstrate more fully our experiences in all their richness. This involves recognising that any attempt at

resolving uncertainties in our accounts is a reduction couched in the present moment, and that any criteria for 'exactness' will also involve an interpretation not present in the moments recounted.[6] In order to explore this further, let us consider what such accounts might involve.

Language and Commitment

When considering the writing of important thinkers associated with the existentialist movement, there are certain noticeable aspects of their language and style. As we have seen in Chapter 3, thinkers such as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard are often fragmentary and disorienting in their accounts, in contrast to the clear and coherent style of policy documents. Both thinkers require an active engagement of the reader, who is then forced to take responsibility for their own interpretations of the pieces. Sartre also wrote with similar purposes in mind, most evidently, perhaps, in *What is Literature?* In this series of essays, he (2001) compares prose and poetry, arguing that the former is subject to scrutiny in accordance with the commitments signalled on the part of the writer, whilst the latter is not. Neither prose nor poetry need necessarily be concerned with 'technically accurate' depictions of the world. But prose *is* concerned with the instrumental use of language in order to convey a *committed response* to the world in a way that poetry is not.[7] Interestingly, whilst we may say that Kierkegaard wrote in a non-committal way (given his use of pseudonyms that masked his own position), the very sense in which he uses rhetorical devices in order to provoke his reader is, in fact, a commitment to the value of writing *as necessarily provocative*. Sartre's autobiography also functions to demonstrate that in giving an account of oneself, one is also attempting to lay one's commitments bare, and to provoke the reader into a reaction by which they, too, must take responsibility for what they think.

In his philosophical writing, Sartre's aim is to offer an account of existence in its most basic conceptual form whilst also showing how this 'makes sense' in concrete, lived experiences. Whilst his writing often appears to be technical, the reason for this is distinct from the technicism inherent in the policies consulted in Part I. Sartre's accounts do not attempt to reduce lived experience to its most simplified format, but instead to open up new ways of accessing, understanding, and accounting for this *as well as* for oneself as a conscious human being. In this sense, his writing may not help to clarify our experiences, but showcases an attempt to capture experience in all its complexity and richness. This may also awaken the reader to the false consciousness by which they live - the overly simplistic ways in which we conceive of being a human, perhaps, or our failed but persistent attempts at certainty in 'knowing' ourselves. Ultimately, his writing thereby signals a commitment to the fundamental irreducibility of human experience.

For Sartre, this failure to find certainty is a key aspect of being human. It is intimately apart of the ways in which consciousness projects itself onto the world, where our attempts to 'know' both the world and ourselves with certainty also involves recognising our inability to do so. In this sense, the drive for certainty is underpinned by a more fundamental *un*certainty. Importantly, existentialist accounts do not shy away from these uncertainties in the way that technicist models of account-giving do. As we have seen, these more reductive models assume that lived experiences can be neatly categorised and are thus open to direct observation and analysis. But if these accounts give us access to the 'objective' data of lived experiences, how might we then explain the different responses that the same data invites? A sociological researcher might consider a self-evaluation account in a more context-sensitive way, seeking,

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[6] This includes criteria formulated on the basis of accuracy, but also sincerity where, as we saw in Chapter 8, it is impossible to deduce with certainty the sincerity of past actions.

[7] Poetry might also do this, but one would not necessarily be fazed if a poet decided *not* to write in a committed way. Sartre argues that poets use language in a different way than prose writers – e.g. they are less concerned with being directly intelligible, or with sending a clear message to their readers.

perhaps, to understand the meaning that is constructed by the individual in relation to wider socio-historical discourses. The public may read the same accounts in different ways, depending on their own personal educational histories. Educational institutions, whose focus is often on holding individuals to account, may analyse information in reference to profiles of effectiveness. Even Lotaria, who uses a computer to make accounts more 'digestible', still *responded* to the data by homing in on words that have the 'richest meaning'. Indeed, one's interpretation of the account – as well as the very account itself - greatly impinges upon the perceived purposes and 'end-points' of account-giving, but also the fundamental commitments of those involved.

In existentialist account-giving, both the construction of an account as well as its reconstruction through our reading of it are essential and ongoing aspects of the process. The point is not that, in amalgamating the two, a more 'accurate' picture of what is going on is made available. Rather, by acknowledging both, one must accept that our interpretations are always belated, that any attempt to 'concretise' one description or analysis over another is not only misguided, but an example of bad faith. It is also to recognise that each account is situated within a scene of address, and that each interpretation of that account is distinct because of one's underlying fundamental projects. In accepting that the multivocal interpretations of accounts are not somehow 'closer' to the brute existence of the situation, we can begin to value this for entirely different reasons – as 'evidence' of the fundamental freedom and responsibility of *all* of those involved in the very process of account-giving itself.

The Tendency to Explain
In Chapters 4 and 5, we explored how, for Sartre, we come to think of our actions in clearly definable ways because of a misinterpretation of the fundamental nature of consciousness as pre-reflective. The conflation of pre-reflective and reflected forms of consciousness seems unavoidable in the act of account-giving, however, given that the language we use to describe experiences inevitably puts us on the 'reflective' plane. Indeed, in making ourselves 'intelligible' to others, we are therefore both grasping at and (re)producing ourselves in the world.

Interestingly, in the case of self-evaluation, there is a hardened separation between the self that is accounted for and the self that is recounting the experience now, *even* when strictly speaking, both are the same person. As we have seen, this arises from the problematic dualism of 'objective' and 'subjective' that underpins the expectations of self-evaluation policy more broadly. In Descartes' mind/matter conception, there is a similar assumption that a clear and direct line of access to one's 'self' is possible without being 'implicated' as the person observing. But for Sartre, the 'self' that Descartes 'discovers' was not there in an *a priori* sense. Rather, it is produced *through* his systematic reflection. Importantly, whilst this 'produced self' is radically distinct from the pre-reflective consciousness that underpins the reflection in the first place, both are nevertheless radically implicated in this act of production.

Descartes' substantial self 'poisons' the pre-reflective consciousness that underpins it, just as our explanations 'poison' those original intentions that move us to act. In pushing the assumption that we should only account for what is explicit or measurable in our practices, self-evaluation also 'poisons' those original and more complex moments that it seeks to capture, including the ways in which one is expected to offer belated explanations of motivations for acting in a certain way. But as indicated in both Chapters 6 and 8, it is impossible to accurately gauge these motivations that move a person to act, particularly given that so much of what we do is pure gesticulation. Even though our explanations of such experiences are always belated, they enter into those moments an opacity that fails to capture the pre-reflective consciousness underpinning our actions in the first place. Hence, the division of the self in self-evaluation, 'where one part can remain at the outside in order to check

whether or not what the other part does is justified in terms of effectiveness' (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019, p. 104) cannot aim at a 'truth' in accordance with a debased sense of accuracy. Of course, this does not imply that it would even be possible to write or to read an account without offering some form of (implicit) explanation for ourselves or for what had happened. But the 'truth' of those explanations needs to be reconceptualised - from a truth measured in accordance with clarity and certainty to a truth as that which we *relate* ourselves to in an ongoing fashion, a relation that is ultimately subject to our committed responses in the world.

My anecdote at the start was not merely an account of what had happened. As narrative researchers testify, the aspects that I recounted were selected, whether in full awareness or not, and as such, they are already infused with meaning and, indeed, *choice*.[8] Narrative researchers may focus on *why* I have selected certain moments, and what that says about what I 'value' in the narrative itself, or the identity I have constructed by virtue of this. But because such explanations are produced in the moment of reflection, coming up with a satisfactory answer to this is a futile endeavour, whether on the part of the reader or on the part of the account-giver. This is not to suggest that I 'made it all up'. Rather, our accounts testify particular situations, but it is our understanding of this situation that can vary in accordance with the freedom underpinning both the account-giver and the reader. Indeed, it is this understanding that is not necessarily amendable to notions of accuracy, where accuracy is thought of as the direct apprehension of the facticity of the situation. As we saw in Chapter 5, our actions in the world are always underpinned by our fundamental projects – the broader sense in which we are oriented in the world in relation to our 'horizons of significance' (to use Taylor's (1989; 1992) terminology), horizons that move (rather than determine) us to act in implicit ways. The meaning of these cannot be extracted and examined in any abstract or exact form, even though they are nevertheless manifested through our actions and responses in situations.

As we have seen, the tendency to explain our actions in the classroom can take a 'hard-lined' stance in the more technicist accounts of teaching. It is not just any explanation that 'counts', but those that can be proven with some kind of explicit form of evidence. This represents what appears to be an inherent mistrust of so-called 'subjectivity' in our analysis of our practices. This, however, is misguided, since it also fails to acknowledge that one is always responding to situations in some way, both in the moments in which they occurred and in the ways in which we account for them afterwards. Importantly, it is not just that subjectivity should be acknowledged, as we often see in research methodologies that ask researchers to 'lay their biases bare'. Subjectivity should be valued as an essential component of the process of account-giving itself because it is only *through* subjectivity that our narratives can come to light in the first place – indeed, that they *make sense*. For Sartre, without the presence of a human subject, there would be no meaning in the situation in the first place, nothing to make sense of, nothing, in fact, to explain, since the very nature of brute existence is its simple 'thereness', without potency or possibility, without meaning. Equally, there would be nothing to 'read' in these accounts without a subject involved - it would simply be like the computer in Calvino's story giving a list of words in order of frequency. In fact, it would not even *be* an account of anything to begin with! In this sense, the process of accounting for experiences (as both the recounter and as the reader) is also a response imbued with a deep and important subjectivism, *even* in those forms of technicist account-giving that attempt to suppress it.

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[8] Choice in this sense does not mean that I am always 'choosing' to offer an account of myself or not, but rather, it relates to the ways in which situations are brought to light by virtue of our (freely chosen) fundamental projects, a choice that is therefore embedded both in situations where one feels compelled to offer an account on their own accord *as well as* in situations where one is forced into offering an account because they are 'answerable' to another (e.g. their superior).

Response and Responsibility

As we have discussed in Part I, the technicist-focused accounts of educational practice (such as school self-evaluation) are connected to the concept of accountability. Accountability is 'chameleon like' but, in simple terms, it may be thought of as being 'called to give an account' to some external authority, a form of social interaction 'in which people are required to explain and take responsibility for their actions' (Sinclair, 1995, pp. 220-221). This in turn implies a relationship between those who seek answers and those who are answerable, those who may impose sanctions and those who anticipate them. There is a distinction between simply *giving* an account and being *called* to give one (Mulgan, 2000), the latter of which implies an authority who 'enforce[s] responsibility' on another (Thynne and Golding, 1987).

Overtime, accountability has become more 'managerial' in nature, and thus more concerned with the performance of individuals and institutions, particularly in the public sector. With this comes the increasing use of the language and logic of financial accounting systems (e.g. 'effectiveness', inputs/outputs binaries). Such forms of accountability often involve a contract of sorts – in exchange for the acceptance of managerially-defined control, it promises new forms of (professional) autonomy (Sinclair, 1995). Ironically, however, this creates what some researchers have called the 'responsibility paradox' (Harmon, 1995), succinctly defined by Jos and Tompkins (2004, p. 256) as follows:

> Responsible interpretation and application of legitimate external accountability demands depends on the cultivation of virtues that support good administrative judgement, but the institution and mechanisms that are used to communicate these external standards, and that monitor compliance with them, often threaten the very qualities that support responsible judgement.

In response to this, many institutions have called for a more genuine sense of so-called 'professional' accountability. This involves not simply holding individuals to account through coercive or managerialist measures, but training professionals to hold *themselves* to account, thereby signalling a shift 'away from the central importance of external scrutiny' (Mulgan, 2000, p. 557). As we have seen in Part I, this is primarily the kind of accountability promoted in school self-evaluation.

Before this is possible, however, those being held to account need first to be recognised as 'professionals', as having acquired the techniques and values necessary for making professional judgements in unsupervised contexts, and as having demonstrated the requisite professional dispositions. These include: a 'sense of (personal) duty' (Sinclair, 1995, p. 230) in relation to their respective professions and to the individuals they are accountable to; a form of 'practical wisdom'[9]; a stable set of cherished values that are steadfastly and consistently applied to relevant situations; an ability to tolerate uncertainty and to conduct oneself with openness and flexibility (e.g. Jos and Tompkins, 2004). Professionals also have reflexive self-understanding such that they can examine and decide on the applicability of professional rules and standards in each situation, 'tacking' between both internal and external viewpoints in order to do so (e.g. Nevo, 2002; McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). Indeed, professionalisation does not imply that individuals are left to their own devices, since most professionals are still answerable to their superiors (Mulgan, 2000, p. 559). Additionally, they are answerable to the numbers – i.e. to inputs, outputs, and other forms of 'objective' measures used to evaluate their performance. Professional accountability therefore involves a responsiveness that is *already*

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[9] This is often linked to the Aristotelian concept of 'phronesis'. In the literature on professional accountability, however, phronesis is often narrowly defined as a 'skill' or a 'technique' (e.g. Jos and Tompkins, 2004).

defined along particular lines - in relation to the needs of 'clients', in anticipation of the wishes of superiors, in the alignment of one's actions with performance measures (O'Loughlin, 1990) or, in the case of school self-evaluation, to standards of effective practice.

The sheer potential of external scrutiny has led many authors to question the so-called 'internal' focus of professional accountability models (e.g. MacBeath, 2006; Grek and Lindgren, 2015; Brady, 2016). But perhaps more importantly, responses that are witnessed are not necessarily evidence that desirable 'character traits' are actually cultivated. Such virtues are measured in accordance with the explicit 'output' of the action, and as such, the belated explanations offered do not necessarily correlate with what moved a person to act. One may behave *as if* they are acting in good judgement, when they are really only focused on ingratiating themselves with superiors, for example. Perhaps, in reality, they care little about the students or other important stakeholders. Whilst the discussion here is not concerned with what 'good judgements' consist in, this nevertheless demonstrates that unpredictable (and perhaps, undesirable) responses to situations may yield the same results as desirable ones, making it therefore impossible to 'test' whether or not a sense of 'genuine' accountability has really been developed.

Importantly, the question of *who* one is accountable to is often unclear, particularly in the context of education where competing demands reveal tensions between personal responsibilities and professional accountability. Such tensions may in part be due to the changeable nature of accountability itself, understood both as 'something a person is or feels', or as 'a more abstract impersonal property of an authoritative structure' (Sinclair, 1995, p. 221). A teacher may know that 'teaching to the test' is harmful to students in the long run, but they may nevertheless recognise that, in some cases, this is a way to ensure so-called 'effective learning'. Thus, the personal responsibility she feels in relation to her students may run counter to her professional accountability. Of course, there is no 'right way' of solving these tensions – arguably, both senses of responsibility are equally justifiable. The point, of course, is that the teacher *responds* nevertheless – either in submission to the professional standards she disagrees with, or by going against them in some respects, or perhaps by finding a balance between the two, as teachers often do.

In what sense might account*ability* relate to offering an account of oneself? Perhaps a deeper understanding of the connection between accountability and responsibility may offer an answer to this question. Returning to Vlieghe and Zamojski's (2019) book, *Towards an Ontology of Teaching*, they consider in part what 'responsibility' in teaching consists in. For them, the default position when thinking about teaching is related to a 'transcendent' rather than an 'immanent' view of education, where teaching is often justified in terms of external demands. Since teaching is often understood in this goal-oriented sense, performance-related accountability has invaded the conversation on what teachers ought to be responsible for.[10] In order to address this, the authors call for an 'immanent view' of education, where teaching is seen as 'autotelic' - a meaningful activity *in and of itself*, corresponding to its own internal

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[10] The authors also locate this line of thinking in what we might consider to be the more 'noble' justifications of education, such as the emancipatory aims that you find in thinkers such as Freire or Rancière.

logic (and, indeed, language) that does not need to be justified in reference to external aims.[11] In reference to the so-called 'logic of emancipation', Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019, p. 79) touch upon something pertinent to our discussion here:

> Within this transcendent framework… freedom is seen as the goal of education… from an immanent point of view i.e. starting from the logic of responsibility, there is always already a sphere of free action in relation with things in the world.

Although accountability in school self-evaluation is not necessarily tied to such aims, it nevertheless applies the same logic – that in order to offer an account of one's actions, the 'freedom' ('autonomy') to do so must be cultivated. But what this denies is the extent to which those giving the account are *already* free. They are, in fact, *already* responsible for the situation that they are recounting, insofar as one must inevitably respond to the situation in which one finds oneself. Indeed, as Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019, p. 88) remark, responsibility means 'giving a response'. Given that we are *always* responding to the situations in which we find ourselves in, we are therefore always responsible *as such*. Indeed, responsibility is embedded in the very situation that one acts, not as 'enforced' or 'cultivated', but a 'fundamental relation of each human being with the world' (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019, p. 88). Indeed, '[it] conditions the very possibility of situations in which someone is rendered accountable' (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019, p. 88). Might we say the same about accountability? That in every situation, we offer a response of both ourselves and of the situation – a response verbalised as an *account* – and for this reason, we are always accountable *as such*?

Of course, the concept of accountability can be understood in both formal and substantive terms – the latter of which relates to *particular* things or persons to whom we are accountable (e.g. students, the lesson, the wider public). Substantive accountability, however, relates to this (aforementioned) ontological condition of *being able* to respond and to offer an account of something, and thus being accountable *as such*. In current educational discourses, our conception of accountability focuses only on the formal sense of the term. In doing so, it denies the extent to which accountability *as such* cannot be defined or decided in any *a priori* sense (in terms of the content of desirable actions) – rather, it is a form of a response that is 'invented in each situation' (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019, p. 93). This therefore points to accountability as a form of 'orientation' rather than something enacted or cultivated with a pre-defined direction, an ongoing process that is (re)negotiated with an existential sensitivity to lived experiences in the classroom.

9.4 Giving an Account of Oneself

So, what then does it mean to give an account? The answer to this question therefore depends on our interpretation of what purpose or use accounts serve, and indeed, what they are. As we saw throughout, technicist accounts are concerned primarily with a debased sense of accuracy, and the use and inculcation of a reductive description of teaching for this purpose. Despite the

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[11] I am not fully convinced by this account of immanence, however, given that any description of teaching that we might call 'immanent' involves implicit norms and expectations that 'transcend' the given moment that is described. Indeed, descriptions involve explanations that are implicitly normative in that they relate to the meaning-making of those offering the account – i.e. their own values that transcend the interpretations of each given moment itself. Whilst I disagree with the overly sharp distinction between transcendence and immanence, the discussion is nevertheless useful in situating the current conception of accountability as that which focuses solely on external justifications rather than the ways in which a teacher is *ontologically* accountable in the classroom.

problematic assumptions that these descriptions harbour, technicist accounts are nevertheless hierarchised as the most 'trustworthy', given the so-called evidence that they are seen to be based upon. Account-giving in the technicist sense is not 'natural' but is a disposition that is cultivated through training and professionalisation. But this is also a cultivated distrust – a distrust in the possibility of accountability without managerialism, and in one's own capacity to account for situations in 'subjective' terms. And whilst some authors claim that professional accountability leads to more autonomy (and therefore more 'trust' in professional judgement), it nevertheless determines criteria for trust such that other kinds of accounts are seen to be unreliable, and, indeed, pointless.

Existentialist accounts, on the other hand, recognise that the act of account-giving is not cultivated but is inherent in teaching itself, since teachers are always responding as subjects to situations and are therefore always responsible *as such*. In the classroom context, teachers inescapably offer an account of something – their meaning-making in situations with others (upon which they base their judgements), the subject matter that they love, the world as they understand it (Vlieghe and Zamojski, 2019), accounts that signal a particular response to the world. In this sense, accountability is not a skill but *a way of being* in the classroom. Importantly, existentialist accounts are not centrally concerned with an accurate portraying of events (ones that can be proven or disproven through selective use of evidence), but rather, with *relating oneself* to such events. Account-giving is thereby a process inevitably underscored by irresolvable complexities and risks, given that the pre-reflective judgements it attempts to account for are ultimately uncapturable, and our explanations for which are always belated. Such forms of account-giving do not postulate a hardened separation between the 'giver' and the 'receiver' of the account. Both, in fact, co-produce the account in different ways, with distinct underlying fundamental commitments that bring different things to light in those accounts. If we are to focus solely on accuracy, then these distinct interpretations would be suppressed. Existentialist account-giving recognise the ways in which accounts are often 'poisoned' by our tendency towards these kinds of linear explanations, but that the ability to continually do so nevertheless signals the deep and inescapable freedom and responsibility not only *for* situations or *for* others, but in the very act of account-giving itself. The purpose of such accounts is not to deduce the reasons for behaviour in situations, and what can be done to guide and improve action in the future. Rather, it is about laying oneself bare - examining the commitments that are made manifest in one's actions and, given the uncertainties that this inevitably involves, to continue to examine and to test those commitments, much like the ongoing parrhesiastic practices of the self.

In the technicist forms, giving an account implies a pre-specified format, direction, and purpose. Existentialist account-giving, however, does not involve such an approach. When I wrote my anecdote above, I did not check with any pre-set framework for what it is that I needed to say. I tried instead to write it like an Emersonian essay, without a real understanding of what would transpire in the writing itself, where it would lead me, or what it would reveal about my practices and about *myself*. This in part demonstrates the riskiness that offering an account in an existentialist sense involves, the anxiety that may appear in not knowing how the account will 'pan out'. Of course, I had all sorts of (Sartrian) 'explanations' in my head already, and I knew that my account was going to be read by others. Undoubtably, Sartre's writing has shaped my conception of teaching considerably over the last number of years, and thus, the account I give is most certainly laced with 'existential threads' that would probably not have existed had I written this a number of years ago. Again, I am not suggesting that this is a blueprint upon which other teachers can offer an account, nor that any of this can really be avoided. But it nevertheless demonstrates account-giving as a response, one that reflects my responsibility both in the situation recounted, in the act of accounting for the situation itself,

and in the process of interpreting it for the purposes of this thesis. It is a form of reflective practice, but not the pre-set 'skill' as defined by Schön (2008) and others. Rather, it serves as an example of care of the self, one that Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019, p. 102) define as a relation of the teacher 'to herself/himself in a particular way, which is not spontaneously given, but which on the contrary presupposes practicing and demands *making a continual effort*'. Accounts are not to be 'settled' in this sense – they are an important part of our continual attempts to understand ourselves and to open ourselves up to continual critique, to 'test' oneself and one's commitments with as much frankness, sincerity, and indeed authenticity, as any account might allow, *despite* the uncertainties and risk that this involves. What, indeed, is the measure of that?

Conclusion

Overall Research Summary

Through engaging with the early existentialist thought of Jean-Paul Sartre, this thesis sought to offer an alternative discourse that serves to generate another way in which to account for the practices of teaching, one that moves from a 'technicist' to an 'existentialist' approach imbued with a sensitivity towards the lived experiences of being a teacher. In the first section, I addressed this in relation to the policy of school self-evaluation in Ireland. I considered the ways in which this policy represents the 'third way' climate of Irish society, where consensus-building is prioritised over debate and dissensus. Although consensus is achieved by deliberation, it nevertheless hierarchises specific communication norms at the expense of others, thus silencing alternative forms of account-giving. I thus set out to explore how a similar logic works in relation to school self-evaluation policy. I identified three interrelated fallacies that this policy represents: the perceived need to balance accountability and autonomy for teachers and for the wider public, the focus on developing a common language of evaluation in order to achieve this, and the hierarchisation of 'data-rich' accounts as a result. As we saw, most educational literature that discusses the drawbacks of self-evaluation focuses on the practical issues surrounding the process. I instead reflected on the problematic assumptions that it harbours, not only in relation to the 'profile' of effective practice that the policy promotes, but also the form of account-giving it encourages. Ultimately, I argued that self-evaluative account-giving is couched within a technicist understanding of teaching that fails to adequately capture the lived experience of being a teacher.

In response to this, I then introduced a very different account of being human through exploring the early existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. I focused mainly on his seminal work *Being and Nothingness*, but also considered other literary and philosophical texts. I analysed four specific components of his early thought: his conceptualisation of pre-reflective consciousness which in turn posits the 'self' as existing in (response to) the world; how such responses signal both a freedom and responsibility that underpins human existence; the ways in which this responsibility is circumvented through the mechanism of bad faith; and finally, how our responses and responsibility are an inherent part of our lived existence with others. Each of these were considered in reference to concrete examples from education, not merely to show how Sartre's ideas might be applied to the educational context, but to demonstrate the ways in which they make sense in the classroom. I argued that by engaging with Sartre as a 'touchstone' of sorts, we can therefore reconceptualise the ways in which we understand – and, indeed, account for – being human, something that has important implications for (accounts of) being a teacher.

In the final section, I offered a comparison between 'technicist' accounts of teaching exemplified in the self-evaluation policies in Part I, and 'existentialist' accounts construed on the basis of my reading of Sartre in Part II. Throughout this section, I explored the extent to which we can 'trust' the sincerity of such accounts, given the ways in which trust and accountability is conceptualised in the current educational context. Through exploring Foucault's conception of 'parrhesia' in Chapter 8, I considered new ways in which one might relate to oneself as a teacher such as to disrupt the problematic conception of 'accuracy' in technicist accounts. Parrhesiastic practices call for frankness, and a continual effort on the part of the account-giver to remain 'authentic' in their accounts. In turn, this involves risk, primarily in terms of exposing oneself to potential self-criticism and criticism from others, but also in terms of the uncertainty that offering an account in this way might involve. In this sense, account-giving is a process that involves both self-examination and self-exposure. I exemplified this in relation to the autobiographical work of Sartre, where I examined the ways in which Sartre demonstrates self-criticism in his accounts of himself in the past, and that by doing so, also encourages the same kind of self-criticism in his readers. Throughout, Sartre also appears to recognise the presence of the Other in his accounts, not only as those embedded in

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his own self-understanding, but also the 'audience' who are engaging with his accounts in the present moment (himself included). In doing so, I showed how this 'scene of address' is an intimate part of the 'self-fashioning' in more authentic forms of account-giving. Moreover, I also demonstrated that, in recounting such events, Sartre's aim does not appear to be the accurate portraying of events. Rather, the account serves as a means by which to relate to oneself in both the past and the present, to take responsibility not only for our actions then, but our responses to those actions now. This, I argue, represents an ongoing sincerity in account-giving, a sincerity that is not seen as a 'cultivated' character trait, or as imposed through accountability regimes, but one that necessitates a continual effort on the part of the account-giver. Ultimately, Sartre's continual reinterpretation of his past through offering an autobiographical account of himself demonstrates this, and as a parrhesiastic act, it demonstrates the value of accounts, not in terms of their (technical) accuracy but their (existential) sensitivity. This model of parrhesiastic account-giving serves to disrupt some of the technicist ways in which teachers are expected to account for their practices and for themselves in self-evaluation discourses, and to offer a new way in which to think of account-giving in light of this.

In the final chapter, I further elaborated on a distinction between technicist accounts as those that concern themselves mainly with a debased sense of accuracy, where account-giving is thought of as a cultivated disposition towards evidence-based norms of communication, for example. I argued that this also implies a cultivated distrust in accounts that do not adhere to these norms. Existentialist accounts, on the other hand, understand account-giving as an inherent process of acting in the world (with others). Indeed, accounts represent responses, and it is in this sense that Sartre's understanding of responsibility can be best understood. This in turn calls for a mode of account-giving that is a process – a process that is by no means 'neat' (since it more closely represents the lived experience of being a teacher) but that necessarily involves an uncertainty not amenable to technicist modes of communication. This is nevertheless important in order to understand what it is that teachers experience, what it is that they are committed to, and thus opens up new ways of accounting for oneself as a teacher.

Final Reflections: Limitations and Further Contributions

Thus, in this thesis, I attempted to demonstrate a new way in which to think about teaching and how we might account for being a teacher, as well as the implications this for our understanding of responsibility, trust, and accountability in education. In Chapter 9, I discussed how this does not necessarily require some kind of 'training' in existentialist thought. But what I *am* suggesting is that an exposure to this line of thinking may make us more sensitive to the nuances in our accounts, to the fact that our explanations always fall short in some way, but that this uncertainty is not something to be 'overcome', despite the anxiety and risks it might entail. This then seems to suggest that there *is* a better way of accounting for oneself, a way that is circumscribed by a more existentialist understanding of the world and of ourselves within it. Does this then mean that I am also suggesting a hierarchisation in the forms of account-giving? Perhaps. Importantly, however, my aim is to generate discussion on these issues rather than offer a prescriptive or definitive model of account-giving. Sartre, in that sense, serves as an example of how we might engage with our practices in a new way, a touchstone that sparks future discussion (much as Socrates serves as a touchstone for parrhesiastic practices, as Foucault (2001) surmises). But so too might other ways of thinking that also compel a response, and that invite us to think about teaching in a way that is not limited by the technicist descriptions prevalent in current educational discourses.

I recognise that there are a number of limitations in Sartre's thought, however. For instance, Sartre's conception of freedom is, as Merleau-Ponty (cited in Cox, 2008) once remarked, so uncompromising that it is untenable. It does not adequately account for the weight

of circumstances, nor the ways in which, at times, it really is impossible to respond to situations in any *meaningful* way. Although, to some extent, it may be true that one does not always recognise their fundamental project unless presented with another way of responding to their situation (like the worker who does not realise he is being exploited until he conceives of the possibility of *not* being exploited), Sartre is somewhat dismissive of the stakes involved in responses, in terms of the extent to which they may change the course of a person's situation, or the consequences of acting otherwise that may prevent us from making a meaningful choice in the first place.

Of course, freedom for Sartre is ontological rather than practical, and is therefore not necessarily about the ability to achieve desired ends, but merely the capacity to conceive of those ends in the first place. Does this also imply that his conception of freedom is *im*practical? Not only this, but such ends are always circumscribed by what we *can* see, and by what we feel that we *can* do within a particular situation, meaning that our separation of the practical and the ontological is perhaps not so straightforward. Sartre also does not always account for the means by which we are presented with another possibility – does this come from another person (like Sartre), or from some event or crisis? Is it always there in the back of our minds? It certainly does not, as *Nausea* might suggest, come from mere individual reflection on our situation. And if one refuses to see things in another way, is it because they are unable to, because they choose not to, or because they are in bad faith? In this sense, Sartre seems to deny the entire apparatus in which our thinking is situated, the means by which we are confronted with other horizons of possibilities, and the limitations this then places on our capacities to think otherwise, or, indeed, to 'grasp' our fundamental project at all. This, too, is true teachers within the current educational regimes.

Sartre also claims not to be explicitly 'normative' in *Being and Nothingness*, promising a later ethical account of his ideas that never really arrived. And yet, how convincing is this supposition? For instance, it does appear at times that concepts such as 'bad faith' *are* accusations, and the examples he gives are often uncomfortable – such as the woman on the date failing to outwardly refuse the man's advances, or the waiter who does not just 'give up' his job but instead relegates himself to objecthood. In light of more recent social movements in particular, the situations that Sartre describe are much more complicated to navigate than he seems ready to admit. He does backtrack on this somewhat in his later years, when he states that '[t]he individual interiorises his social determinations…the relation of production, the family of his childhood, the historical past, the contemporary institutions'. Yet, he still never quite let go of the idea that we can always respond to these situations on an *individual* level, where, in the same interview, he also states that 'a man can always make something out of what is made of him' (Sartre, 2008a, p. 35). But what *meaningful* response can we expect when someone's foot is on our neck – both literally and figuratively? In many ways, therefore, I accept that Sartre may not accurately capture the lived experience of many individuals, the motivations – or indeed possibilities – of our actions at times, or the ways in which our responses are influenced by things that are external to our fundamental projects. I also recognise that his later works, which I do not give much weight to here, may offer a more nuanced account of the stakes involved in acting freely with others - that, indeed, there is a distinction between the innocent victim and the implicated agent, and that we are also limited not just by facticity but also by what he (2004; 2006) later calls 'counter-finalities', where we are not always in control of – and thus wholly responsible for – the outcomes of our actions. My reasoning for this is that, in order to understand any sense of 'collective responsibility', we must first pay attention to individual responses in the world. Indeed, as both Sartre and Foucault remark, the individual is always *ontologically prior* to the collective. What is thus valuable in Sartre's earlier line of thought is the extent to which he trie*s* to capture the lived experience of the *individual* without reifying them to the realm of the *collective*. In turn, he offers a particular

conception of the world that is open for discussion, and his works – whether 'right' or 'wrong' (in both the moral and in the epistemological sense) compel a response in ways that, in my mind, few other philosophers do.

Nevertheless, Sartre's account of our relationship with others seems to deny the sense in which the Other is often embedded in rather than in confrontation with the individual. Indeed, his account of the Other seems to focus almost wholly on the conflictual nature of this relationship, something that on one level implies that this relationship is something to be overcome in order for us to be 'authentic' individuals. In Chapter 7, I offered an example from my own practice that calls this into question, in terms of the ways in which we inevitably 'use' the tools of others in order to realise our own freedom, as well as the ways in which we can experience something *collectively* that is educationally worthwhile. My example, however, seemed to imply that the only way to experience this is to 'suspend' oneself, and in turn, to 'suspend' the subjectivity that we are, that objectifies and that therefore confronts others. But might there be a way in which the subjectivity of both the Other and I can exist side by side, something closer to the concept of *Mitsein* in Heidegger's account, or the kind of solidarity that de Beauvoir fashions in *The Second Sex*? As I demonstrated in the final part of the thesis, any account we give of ourselves will always be with the Other in mind, one that does not necessarily imply a conflictual relationship with them. Indeed, we need the Other in order to *know who we are*, even if who we are is a continual process that does not correlate exactly to the ways in which the other sees us, or indeed, the ways in which we account for ourselves at discrete moments in our lives.

Although my account of 'technicism' in education seems to undermine a *scientific* approach to understanding and describing what it means to be human, the issue that I take is in relation to *scientism*, in fact. Unlike scientism, science questions itself continually. It accepts uncertainty by employing the best models that work in this moment, knowing implicitly that those models may be overturned at some point once another discovery is made. But the problem arises when science becomes dogmatic – when there is an unquestioning faith in the scientific method such that it contradicts the kinds of uncertainty that drives science in the first place. Scientism is thus not only a misinterpretation of what science is, or what it involves, but it is also an example of 'bad faith'.

Might the same argument also apply to our understanding of policy? Indeed, policies are not to be dismissed outright – they are, in many ways, the best 'model' of practice that we have *for now*. Part of what I tried to do so is to unpack some of the questions we might ask of the *particular* policy of self-evaluation which, in turn, has implications for policymaking more generally. But policies are ultimately a response to a situation. And they are also something teachers respond to on some level since, as Braun *et al.* (2010) demonstrated, they are 'enacted' rather than 'implemented'. Indeed, policies are not simply documents that are read and applied in a linear sense. They are interpreted and deliberated on, working differently in different contexts. To have faith in policy as the 'solver' of all potential issues is to dismiss the very nature of policy itself, as that which is enacted at a local level. What this thesis therefore calls for is a nuanced understanding of policy as well as cautioned approach to our use of them in practice, but not a complete overhaul of any possibility of policy in the future.

In many ways, my thesis might be accused of being 'impractical' – it does little to help the challenging experiences of teachers in the present moment (particularly, perhaps, in light of the changing nature of educational spaces in light of the Covid-19 pandemic). Indeed, what would a teacher *do* with all of this? How would it help them? The answer to this, of course, depends of *what* we are keen on helping them do, and for what reason. Might this model of account for oneself help teachers improve? Perhaps not in terms of the standards of effective practice, but perhaps in another way – recognising that teaching is not an easy endeavour but requires much in the way of self-sacrifice. I do not mean this in the strictly 'heroic' sense, but

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in terms of the ways in which our 'self' is always on display as teachers, and the idea that this exposure is an important and necessary component of the act of teaching in the first place. This, as Biesta (2014) remarks, is part of the 'beautiful risk' of education. Thus, uncertainty need not be construed in negative terms, as something that needs to be overcome. It need not be seen as opposite to the assuredness that comes from our engagement with 'evidence'. In this sense, my discussion can pave the way for such important reconceptualization, and in doing so, disrupts the technicist discourses that fight against so much of what is essential to teaching.

My research has focused on teachers almost exclusively, but there are also important implications for students as well. As such, it may be interesting to expand these ideas to also consider student experiences in the classroom. Indeed, it is not just teachers that respond or that offer an account of themselves in those situations – students, too, offer such accounts that in turn impacts upon 'who they are' as well as how things are brought to light in the classroom. This would require a reconceptualization of 'learners' and 'learning' in much the same vein, perhaps with a greater emphasis on the fact that teaching is inescapably relational, as Biesta (2014) also discusses. It would also be interesting to consider these ideas from a less general perspective – for instance, teachers and students who come from different backgrounds that may respond in distinct ways, thus showcasing even more the rich and diverse ways in which individuals account for themselves in concrete situations. As Sartre teaches us, these ideas should start from the point of view of the individual person and their lived experience, something that, in some small way, my thesis has endeavoured to illuminate.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: *School Self-Evaluation Framework: Statements of Practice* (DES, 2016a, pp. 23-31)

DOMAIN 1: LEARNER OUTCOMES

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners	Students' enjoyment in learning is evident and is often linked to a sense of making progress and of achievement. Their engagement with learning contributes to their sense of well-being. Students are motivated to learn, and this is often linked to having a clear sense of attainable learning outcomes. Students see themselves as learners and demonstrate this in their positive approach to classwork and homework.	Students' enjoyment in learning is evident and **arises from** a sense of making progress and of achievement. Their engagement with learning contributes to their sense of well-being. Students are motivated to learn **through having** a clear sense of attainable **and challenging** learning outcomes. Students see themselves as learners and demonstrate this in their positive **and reflective** approach to classwork and homework.
Students have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand themselves and their relationships	Students demonstrate a knowledge, appropriate to their stage of development, of their own behaviour as individuals and as members of a group. They can apply this knowledge to manage situations, and to support their well-being. Students have the skills to modify and adapt their behaviour when required. Students demonstrate an enquiring attitude towards themselves and those around them.	Students demonstrate a knowledge, appropriate to their stage of development, of their own behaviour as individuals and as members of a group. **They apply this knowledge thoughtfully** to manage situations and support their well-being. Students have the skills to modify and adapt their behaviour when required, **and recognise the need to do so themselves.** Students demonstrate an enquiring **and open-minded** attitude towards themselves and those around them.
Students demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum	Students' subject-specific skills are developed in accordance with the relevant learning outcomes for the syllabus, specification or course. Students demonstrate good subject knowledge and subject skill at an appropriate level, and demonstrate this at the relevant assessment points in the year or cycle. Junior cycle students have generally attained proficiency in the prescribed key skills appropriate to their stage in the cycle. Senior cycle students have generally attained proficiency in the skills required for successful learning in the programmes they are following.	Students' subject-specific skills are developed in accordance with the relevant learning outcomes for the syllabus, specification or course. Students demonstrate **very good** subject knowledge and subject skill at an appropriate level, and demonstrate this at the relevant assessment points in the year or cycle. Junior cycle students **have attained** proficiency in the prescribed key skills appropriate to their stage in the cycle. Senior cycle students **have attained** proficiency in the skills required for successful learning in the programmes they are following.

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Students attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme	Students achieve the intended learning of the lesson or sequence of lessons, which has been appropriately differentiated where necessary. Students achieve the intended learning outcomes for the term and year, which has been appropriately differentiated where necessary. Students' achievement in summative assessments, including certificate examinations, is in line with or above expectations.	Students achieve, and **at times surpass**, the intended learning of the lesson or sequence of lessons, which has been appropriately differentiated where necessary. Students achieve, and **at times surpass**, the intended learning for the term and year, which has been appropriately differentiated where necessary. Students' achievement in summative assessments, including certificate examinations, is in line with or above expectations.

DOMAIN 2: LEARNER EXPERIENCES

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Students engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities	Students demonstrate high levels of interest and participation in learning. They are able to work both independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner. They understand and can explain the purpose of the learning tasks they are engaged in. They are able to report on, present, and explain the process and outcome of learning activities to a competent level.	Students demonstrate **very high** levels of interest and participation in learning. They are able to work both independently and collaboratively in a **very purposeful and productive** manner. They understand and can explain the purpose of the learning tasks they are engaged in, **and can extend and develop the activity meaningfully**. They are able to report on, present, and explain the process and outcome of learning activities to a **highly competent** level.
Students grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive	Interactions among students and between students and teachers are respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being. Relationships and interactions in classrooms and learning areas support a co-operative and productive learning environment. Students' experiences as learners generally reflect well on how the code of behaviour is understood and implemented. Students feel able to contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion. They listen respectfully to the opinions and experiences of their classmates. They ask questions and suggest possible solutions confidently. They are willing to risk incorrect responses, and accept that mistakes are part of the learning process. They demonstrate a sufficient level of motivation to engage and persist with increasingly challenging work.	Interactions among students and between students and teachers are **very respectful and positive**, and conducive to well-being. Relationships and interactions in classrooms and learning areas **create and sustain** a co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment. Students' experiences as learners reflect **consistently well** on how the code of behaviour is understood and implemented. Students contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion **with confidence. They are respectful of and interested in** the opinions and experiences of their classmates. They ask questions and suggest possible solutions **very confidently**. They are willing to risk incorrect responses, and **understand the value of making mistakes, using them as learning opportunities**. They demonstrate a **high level** of motivation, and **enjoy engaging and persisting with** increasingly challenging work.

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Students reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning	Students assess their progress and are aware of their strengths and areas for development as learners. They take pride in their work and follow the guidance they receive to improve it. They reflect on their behaviour and attitude to learning, and are able to contribute to setting meaningful goals for themselves. Where the school curriculum provides opportunities to do so, students are able to negotiate their learning thereby increasing their autonomy as learners. Students take responsibility for their own learning, and use the learning resources provided to them to develop their skills and extend their knowledge.	Students assess their progress **realistically** and **can describe** their strengths and areas for development as learners. They have **a sense of ownership of their work**, take pride in it, and **take responsibility for improving it**. They reflect on their behaviour and attitude to learning, and **are able to set meaningful personal goals as a result of their reflection**. Where the school curriculum provides opportunities to do so, students **negotiate their learning** thereby increasing their autonomy and **effectiveness** as learners. Students take responsibility for their own learning, and use both the learning resources provided to them, **and those that they source themselves**, to develop their skills and extend their knowledge.
Students experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning	Students make meaningful connections between learning in different subjects and areas of the curriculum. Students make meaningful connections between school-based learning and learning that takes place in other contexts. Students can, with some guidance, transfer and apply skills learned in one context to another context. Students are aware of the key skills underpinning the curriculum and of their relevance to present and future learning. They take the opportunities provided by curricular and other learning experiences to apply and develop these key skills. Students have an age-appropriate understanding of the concept of lifelong learning, and are well disposed to continuing education and training.	Students make meaningful **and authentic** connections between learning in different subjects and areas of the curriculum. Students make meaningful **and authentic** connections between school-based learning and learning that takes place in other contexts. Students can, **of their own initiative**, transfer and apply skills learned in one context to another context. Students **can explain** the key skills underpinning the curriculum and **understand** their relevance to present and future learning. They take the opportunities provided by curricular and other learning experiences to apply and develop these key skills **consciously and deliberately**. Students have an age-appropriate understanding of the concept of lifelong learning, and **see themselves engaging in** continuing education and training.

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.

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STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
The teacher selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning	Teachers' plans identify clear, relevant learning intentions that are contextualised to students' learning needs.	Teachers' plans identify clear, relevant learning intentions that are contextualised to students' learning needs. **Learning intentions reflect a developmental and incremental approach to progressing students' learning.**
	Teachers design and prepare in advance a sequence of learning tasks and activities suitable for the specific learning intentions of the lesson or series of lessons.	Teachers design and prepare in advance a sequence of learning tasks and activities suitable for the specific learning intentions of the lesson or series of lessons. **Lesson design is flexible to allow for emerging learning opportunities.**
	Teachers identify and prepare in advance resources suitable for the specific learning intentions of each lesson, or series of lessons, and the learning needs of the class.	Teachers identify and **thoroughly** prepare in advance resources **tailored to match** the specific learning intentions of each lesson, or series of lessons, and **individual students' learning need**s.
	Teachers' preparation includes preparation for the differentiation of learning intentions and learning activities, and is informed by meaningful use of data.	Teachers' preparation includes preparation for the differentiation of learning intentions and learning activities, **including personalised learning opportunities**, and is informed by meaningful use of data.
	Teachers plan for assessing students' attainment of the learning intentions of the lesson, or series of lessons, using both assessment of learning and assessment for learning.	Teachers plan for assessing **all relevant aspects of students' learning** using both assessment of learning and assessment for learning.
	Teachers' assessment practices include not only assessment of knowledge but also assessment of skills and dispositions.	Teachers' assessment practices include not only assessment of knowledge but also assessment of skills and dispositions. **Teachers tailor assessment strategies to meet individual learning needs.**
	Teachers regularly provide students with constructive, developmental oral and written feedback on their work.	Teachers regularly provide students with constructive, developmental oral and written feedback. **Teachers use feedback to work with students on clear strategies for improvement.**
	Teachers share success criteria with students so that they can assess their own learning through self-assessment and peer assessment.	Teachers share and **co-create** success criteria with students so that they can assess their own learning through self-assessment and peer assessment, and **identify areas for improvement and strategies to achieve improvement.**
	Teachers maintain assessment records that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share.	Teachers maintain assessment records that are clear, useful, easy to interpret and share, **and tailored to students' individual learning needs.**

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STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
The teacher selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intentions and to students' learning needs	Teachers strategically select and use approaches to match the learning intentions of the lesson and meet the learning needs of students.	Teachers strategically select and use approaches to match the learning intentions of the lesson, meet the learning needs of students, and **open up further learning opportunities**.
	Teachers deliver good-quality instruction which is directed at eliciting student engagement. Teachers maintain a balance between their own input and productive student participation and response.	Teachers deliver **highly effective** instruction which is directed at eliciting **deep** student engagement. Teachers **skilfully manage their own input to optimise** student participation and response.
	Teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively for a variety of purposes including stimulating substantial student responses and facilitating deeper engagement with lesson content.	Teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively for a variety of purposes including stimulating substantial student responses, facilitating deeper engagement with lesson content **and extending learning beyond the lesson**.
	Teachers meaningfully differentiate content and activities in order to cater for the varying needs and abilities of students.	Teachers meaningfully differentiate content and activities in order **to ensure that all students are challenged by the learning activities and experience success as learners**.
	Teachers purposefully develop relevant literacy and numeracy skills during lessons.	Teachers **integrate** relevant literacy and numeracy skills **into the fabric of the lesson**.
	Teachers enable students to make meaningful links between lesson material and their learning in other subjects and elsewhere.	Teachers enable students to make meaningful links between lesson material and their learning in other subjects, **and to transfer their learning to unfamiliar experiences**.
The teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary	Teachers are aware of students' individual learning needs, and adapt teaching and learning practices to help students overcome challenges.	Teachers are aware of students' individual learning needs, **and design and implement personalised interventions** to help students overcome challenges.
	Teachers engage with students' opinions, dispositions, and contexts, and modify their teaching practice to build on opportunities and address any limitations that they present.	Teachers engage with students' opinions, dispositions, and contexts, and modify their teaching practice to build on opportunities and address any limitations that they present. **Teachers empower students to exploit these opportunities and overcome their limitations.**

DOMAIN 4: TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE/COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Teachers value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration	Teachers recognise that continuing professional development (CPD) and collaboration are intrinsic to their work.	Teachers recognise **and affirm** continuing professional development (CPD) and collaboration as intrinsic to their work.
	Teachers use formal meeting and planning time to reflect together on their work.	Teachers use formal meeting and planning time to reflect together on their work.
	Teachers engage actively and productively with a variety of CPD providers including organised school-based CPD.	**The school is the primary locus for teachers' CPD** and teachers engage actively and productively with CPD programmes.
	Teachers identify and engage in CPD that develops their own practice and meets the needs of students and the school.	Teachers identify and engage in CPD that develops their own practice, meets the needs of students and the school, and **enhances collective practice**.
	Teachers view collaboration as a means to improve student learning and to enhance their own professional development. They engage in constructive collaborative practice.	Teachers view collaboration as a means to improve student learning and to enhance their own professional development. They engage in constructive collaborative practice, **and in collaborative review of practice**.
	Teachers implement whole-school approaches to teaching and learning to improve students' experiences and outcomes.	Teachers **collectively agree** and implement whole-school approaches to teaching and learning to improve students' experiences and outcomes.
Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum	Teachers plan collaboratively for learning activities that enable students to make meaningful connections between learning in different subjects.	Teachers plan collaboratively for learning activities that enable students to make meaningful and **progressively more challenging** connections between learning in different subjects.
	Teachers collaboratively plan learning experiences that help students to see learning as a holistic and lifelong endeavour.	Teachers collaboratively plan learning experiences that **enable and empower** students to see learning as a holistic and lifelong endeavour.
	Teachers work effectively with each other and with parents to support students with identified learning needs.	Teachers work **very effectively** with each other and with parents to support students with identified learning needs.
	Teachers use parent-teacher meetings and other communication with parents constructively to support parents' meaningful involvement in their children's education.	Teachers use parent-teacher meetings and other communication with parents **very constructively** to support parents' meaningful involvement in their children's education and **development as learners**.
	Teachers collaborate with relevant and appropriate outside personnel to provide meaningful learning experiences for students.	Teachers collaborate with relevant and appropriate outside personnel to provide meaningful learning experiences for students, and **work together to ensure that the learning is integrated**.

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Teachers collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices	Teachers approach assessment as a collaborative endeavour to support students' learning and to measure their attainment. Teachers have collectively developed a whole-school policy on assessment that is appropriate to the curriculum and to their students. The policy includes formative and summative assessment practices. It is implemented consistently. Teachers have collectively developed a whole-school approach to providing developmental oral and written feedback to students. This approach is implemented consistently, and includes the collective review of students' work. Teachers have collectively developed assessment records that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share. These records provide a comprehensive picture of each student's learning attainments and needs.	Teachers approach assessment as a collaborative endeavour to support students' learning and to measure their attainment. Teachers have collectively developed a whole-school policy on assessment that is appropriate to the curriculum and to their students. The policy includes formative and summative assessment practices. It is implemented consistently **and is reviewed collectively**. Teachers have collectively developed a whole-school approach to providing developmental oral and written feedback to students. This approach is implemented consistently, and **is underpinned by** the collective review of students' work. Teachers have collectively developed assessment records that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share. These records provide a comprehensive picture of each student's learning attainments and needs and **are built on progressively as the student moves through the school**.
Teachers contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise	Teachers recognise the value of building whole-staff capacity and are willing to share their expertise with other teachers in the school. Teachers are willing to share their expertise with teachers from other schools, for example through education centres, online forums, and school visits. Teachers engage regularly in professional collaborative review of teaching and learning practices. Teachers are open to building collective expertise in the skills and approaches necessary to facilitate student learning for the future.	Teachers **value their role within a professional learning organisation**, and **as a matter of course** share their expertise with other teachers in the school. Teachers **share** their expertise with teachers from other schools, for example through education centres, online forums, and school visits. Teachers engage regularly in professional collaborative review of teaching and learning practices, and **use it to identify and build on effective approaches**. Teachers are **proactive** in building collective expertise in the skills and approaches necessary to facilitate student learning for the future.

Appendix 2: Teacher Questionnaire example of best practice. Available online at: http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/post-primary/stories-schools/reports-plans/

Questionnaire on Teaching Practice

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey. Please answer honestly. The results will be shared with you & used to identify current strengths and areas for improvement in teaching practice.

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1. Focus of learning: during my lessons, attention is given to the systematic development & application of: You may select more than one box
   - ✓ Knowledge/content
   - ✓ Subject specific skills
   - ✓ Literacy skills
   - ✓ Numeracy skills
   - ✓ ICT skills
   - ✓ Communication skills
   - ✓ Managing myself skills
   - ✓ Staying well skills
   - ✓ Managing information & thinking skills
   - ✓ Being creative skills
   - ✓ Working with other skills
   - ✓ Cross-curricular links

2. I provide opportunities REGULARLY for my students to learn: You may select more than one box
   - ✓ Independently
   - ✓ In pairs/small groups
   - ✓ By listening to me & taking down my notes
   - ✓ By making their own notes
   - ✓ By investigative/self-directed learning
   - ✓ By using technology e.g. i-pads, powerpoints, web 2.0 tools
   - ✓ Other:

3. I use the following REGULARLY during my lessons: You may select more than one box
   - ✓ Comprehension strategies e.g. key words, KWL, anticipation guide, mindmaps
   - ✓ Student teaching/presenting to the class
   - ✓ Peer-teaching
   - ✓ Newspaper/magazine articles, on-line resources etc.
   - ✓ Editing checklists for students (based on my own set of criteria)
   - ✓ Problem solving strategies e.g. LUV2CU
   - ✓ Other:

4. Questions during my lessons: You may select more than one box
   - ✓ Are varied according to e.g. Blooms Taxonomy
   - ✓ Are supported by a problem solving approach (e.g. PQE Point Quote Explain)
   - ✓ Are equitably distributed among the students
   - ✓ Are ANSWERED clearly with subject specific language

✓   Includes adequate wait time

- Other:

5. I differentiate REGULARLY in my classroom by varying: You may select more that one box

✓   Content
✓   Activities
✓   Methodologies
✓   Resources
✓   Assessment
✓   Types of questions (Bloom's Taxonomy)

6. Learning outcomes for my lessons are: You may select more than one box

✓   Syllabus-linked
✓   Shared with students at the start of every class
✓   Not always shared as prediction methods used e.g. brainstorming, KWL
✓   Assessed at the end each lesson (through quest., observation..)
✓   Achieved during the lesson
✓   Other:

7. My assessment techniques REGULARLY include the following: You may select more than one box

✓   Established evaluation criteria that is shared with students
✓   Feedback provided that is clear and focused
✓   Outcomes are analysed
✓   Outcomes are used to inform subsequent learning
✓   Self-assessment
✓   Peer-assessment
✓   Other:

8. Please rate your effectiveness at using pair/group work using the rubric provided

	4	3	2	1
Use of pair/group work				
Methods/approaches used to develop pair/group work				
Effort to promote positive interdependence				
Effort to develop individual accountability				

Appendix 3: Paired work Rubric for Teachers: example of best practice. Available online at:
http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/post-primary/stories-schools/reports-plans/

Rubric
Teacher assessment of using paired work in the classroom

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Teacher's use of paired work in the classroom	Regularly assigns students to work in pairs	Sometimes assigns students to work in pairs	Occasionally assigns students to work in pairs	Does not assign students to work in pairs
Teacher's methodology or approaches to developing students paired work skills	Explicitly states, monitors or rewards pairs for social skills expected during the task	States and monitors pairs for social skills expected but does not reward	States expected pair social skills but does not monitor or reward	Does not state, monitor or reward pairs for social skills
Teacher's effort to promote positive inter-dependence	Consistently organises tasks so students must rely on one another to complete the task	Frequently organises tasks so that students must rely on each other to complete the task	Occasionally organises tasks so that students must rely on each other to complete the task	Organises tasks that students may complete alone
Teacher's effort to develop student's individual accountability	Consistently uses pair work that requires students to think/work for themselves first before working with their partner	Frequently uses pair work that requires students to think/work for themselves before working with their partner	Rarely uses pair work that requires students to think/work for themselves first before working with their partner	Organises tasks so that students work together only – even though that might result in one student doing all the work