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Edited by
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Chapter 9

Varieties of Consciousness under Oppression

False Consciousness, Bad Faith, Double Consciousness, and Se faire objet

Jennifer McWeeny

In a gesture that both embraces and leaves behind the core tenet of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy, Beauvoir writes, "Woman, like man, is her body; but her body is something other than herself" (2009, 41). Fanon expresses a similarly ambivalent attitude in regard to Sartre's phenomenology when he maintains that "ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man" (1967, 110). Such statements emphasize the potentially Trojan nature of phenomenology's contribution to political movement and social change. On the one hand, phenomenological methods involve the suspension of conventional ontological assumptions and the careful consideration of concrete, first-personal experiences. Phenomenology thus makes possible a study like *The Second Sex*, which exposes the ruses of sexist oppression by attending to the difference between third-person views of woman and woman's first-personal view of herself. On the other hand, however, insofar as phenomenology continues the Kantian project that aims to specify the conditions for the possibility of experience without recognizing the varied applicability of those conditions to different kinds of bodies, it will tend toward the production of universalizing accounts of ontological and existential structures that unreflectively entrench the political status quo. Beauvoir's and Fanon's emphases on the ways that certain bodies elude the descriptions of consciousness that ground Merleau-Ponty's and Sartre's ontologies bring this phenomenological and political pitfall to light.

What would it mean for phenomenology to move in an ontological direction that would render its relevance to contemporary political movement less ambiguous while at the same time retaining those aspects of its method that are epistemologically and politically advantageous? The present study crafts the beginnings of a response to this question by examining four configurations

of consciousness that seem to be respectively tied to certain oppressive contexts and certain kinds of oppressed bodies: (1) false consciousness, (2) bad faith, (3) double consciousness, and (4) *se faire objet* (making oneself an object). Such a comparison both promises to widen our understanding of the ontology of consciousness in general and generates a suggestive vision of what it would take to follow through, ontologically speaking, on the idea that consciousness is fundamentally and irrevocably of a bodily nature.

1. FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS AND FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS

Friedrich Engels famously describes false consciousness as that component of an ideological process whereby "the real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to the thinker" (Marx and Engels 1975, 434). This obfuscation facilitates economic progress, both by enabling the one who controls the means of production to better exploit workers and by rendering workers complicit with the system that oppresses them.¹ According to Marx and Engels, false consciousness arises from the material conditions of production and therefore can only be genuinely overcome when those material conditions change. The Marxist notion of false consciousness is thus premised on recognizing the constitutive tie between a material state of affairs and a particular kind of consciousness.

Feminists such as Sandra Bartky and Catherine MacKinnon have built upon this Marxist frame of false consciousness while also transforming the concept in crucial ways in order to describe a woman's considered investment in the very beliefs and practices that enable her oppression. The false consciousness of a woman living in a sexist context entails both the false perception of reality and a belief in the truth of this false perception. Bartky illustrates the distinction between false consciousness and a feminist consciousness that sees reality differently with the following example: "Women workers who are not feminists know that they receive unequal pay for equal work, but they may think that the arrangement is just; the feminist sees this situation as an instance of exploitation and an occasion for struggle" (1975, 429).² The workers who exhibit false consciousness are aware of the same brute conditions surrounding women's existence that a feminist is, but they trace these conditions to origins that are not their actual cause. Similarly, women who dress for the male gaze or strive for male approval, who identify their self-worth with their homemaking or domestic capabilities, who readily accommodate male sexual needs, or who embrace traditionally feminine traits such as passivity, childishness, and intellectual dependence are likely afflicted with a false consciousness that confuses the dictates of a sexist system with their own desires.

Insofar as large numbers of women partake in false consciousness, feminist political movement must embrace the method known as "consciousness-raising" as the primary means by which to effect radical social change. MacKinnon describes this practice that emerged formally within women's liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s: "Consciousness raising is a face to face social experience that strikes at the fabric of meaning of social relations between and among women and men by calling their givenness into question and reconstituting their meaning in a transformed and critical way" (1989, 95). By sharing their lived experiences with one another, especially in regard to those aspects of life deemed private or domestic, women come to realize that their experiences of struggle are less the result of personal idiosyncracies or a natural order than they are the obvious consequence of a pervasive system of sexist oppression. Generating this kind of knowledge is not primarily a matter of objective analysis; instead, the clearest indications of a woman's oppression are to be found in her own experiences, the content of which are raised to the level of her reflective awareness in the collective encounter. MacKinnon thus observes that "feminism turns theory itself, the pursuit of a true analysis of social life, into the pursuit of consciousness" (84). Bartky arrives at a similar conclusion: "To become a feminist is to develop a radically altered consciousness of oneself, of others and of ... social reality" (1975, 426).

Although Bartky and MacKinnon follow Marx and Engels in seeing false consciousness as a mystification of personal motives and desires that protects the oppressors and renders oppression more effective and efficient, there is a key difference between Marxist and feminist descriptions of false consciousness. The Marxist locates the tools for overcoming false consciousness *externally* in the shifting material conditions of production, but feminists believe these tools are both *internal* to the woman's consciousness and unique to that consciousness. In MacKinnon's words, "The process [of consciousness-raising] identifies the problem of subordination as something that can be accessed through women's consciousness, or lived knowing, of her situation" (1989, 95). The feminist account of false consciousness therefore engenders a paradox that is absent in the Marxist form: false consciousness must contain within itself the means for demystifying its own false perceptions. The feminist program of consciousness-raising rests on the idea that a woman's consciousness is at some level cognizant of the true causes and mechanisms of sexist oppression. Furthermore, only a woman's consciousness has the appropriate content or past experiences that would lift the veil of false consciousness. By approaching her consciousness in a new way through the practice of consciousness-raising, a woman's hidden knowledge of sexist oppression will loosen and surface. Consciousness-raising is therefore a practice that centrally attends to the phenomenon of "women experiencing how they experience

themselves" (MacKinnon 1989, 96). Put differently, consciousness-raising is a collective investigation of the structure of women's consciousnesses.

In both its feminist and Marxist versions, false consciousness is a configuration of consciousness that can be realized by anyone living within an oppressive system. For Marx and Engels, false consciousness is even impossible to avoid since its presence is a function of the means of production; both the oppressor and the oppressed will be afflicted, although the consequences of this mystification will likely be different for each role. By contrast, feminist understandings of false consciousness attribute varying degrees of consciousness to different social actors. For example, any particular woman can be more or less affected by false consciousness based on the consciousness-raising that she has undergone. Though the material conditions of sexism may be a factor in the constitution of a woman's consciousness, they are not entirely determinative of that consciousness on the feminist view. Opposing conditions such as access to education and the proximity and availability of other women continuously threaten to expose the ruses of false consciousness just as sexist practices work to further entrench that consciousness. A woman's consciousness is thus one that is constituted by the capacity to assume at least two different modes—false consciousness and feminist or "raised" consciousness—and that always teeters between them, always has a momentum to slide into its other mode. Bartky stresses that feminist consciousness, in particular, is an "anguished consciousness" because it apprehends its own instability—the instability of a woman's situation under sexism in a "world which dissimulates"—and this knowledge leads to frustration, isolation, and paranoia (1975, 428, 433).

As may already be evident, there are important similarities and differences between the feminist idea of false consciousness and Sartre's notion of bad faith. Exploring this comparison in depth will allow us to extend our consideration of the relationship between social context and the structure of consciousness.

2. UNEVEN DISTRIBUTIONS OF BAD FAITH

Although Sartre does not explicitly conceive of bad faith as a response to oppression, the primary examples that he uses to illustrate the phenomenon point in this direction. He speaks of a frigid woman in Wilhelm Stekel's study on that subject, of another woman who is ambivalent about a man's sexual advances, of workers and laborers like the waiter and grocer who are expected to reduce themselves to their social function, and of the homosexual who is reluctant to confirm or designate his sexuality. All of these instances depict a social situation that disproportionately constrains the free expression

of those consciousnesses tied to bodies that are in some way disadvantaged by that situation. In this respect, Sartre's examples appear to contradict the universalism implied by his suggestion that "consciousness conceals in its being, a permanent risk of bad faith" (1956, 116). Although the structure of consciousness universally enables a risk of bad faith, it seems that not every consciousness carries the same level of risk. The situations of the oppressed render them more likely to act in bad faith because they live with more constraints on the expression of their freedoms.

Sartre famously describes bad faith (*la mauvaise foi*) as "a lie to oneself" (1956, 87). A person acts in bad faith when he thinks of himself as a good son while also failing to care for his elderly mother, when a woman believes her purchase of fine clothes produced in a sweat-shop is counterbalanced by her donations to charity, when a student maintains that he is not sexist or racist while laughing at jokes about women of color whenever they are not present, or when a commuter considers herself generous at the same time that she pushes past others in the subway to enter first. The motivation behind such lies, Sartre tells us, is, quite simply, *escape* (110). Bad faith is a strategy that a person employs in order to put himself at a distance from himself, "out of reach," so that in this slippage between who he takes himself to be and who he actually is, the reality of his existential situation and its responsibilities can be ducked and avoided (110).

Yet bad faith is palliative toward our existential condition at best and aggravating at worst. The escape sought by bad faith is never achieved because its actions are never really plausible as lies. A successful lie demands two distinct consciousnesses: one who tells the lie and another who believes it. But bad faith, like false consciousness, is a strategy assumed by one and the same consciousness. A contradiction thus arises in the idea of a consciousness lying to itself reminiscent of one that animates false consciousness: the consciousness both *knows* that its bad faith is a lie and is nonetheless tricked by the falsehood. Bad faith is thus not so much a lie as it is a dogged belief, a *faith* in an object that it does not possess with certainty but that it does not entirely lack either. For this reason, Sartre writes that "the project of bad faith must be itself in bad faith" (1956, 112).

The phenomenon of bad faith leads Sartre to consider "the structures of being which permit us to form concepts of bad faith" (1956, 112). Sartre maintains that bad faith is only possible for a consciousness that is not coincident with itself but that instead partakes in projects of transcendence—a continuous surpassing of its present existence toward a future existence. Consciousness "makes itself be (*se faire être*)" (115) by "projecting itself beyond the world toward its own possibilities" (100), but, in so doing, consciousness "pass[es] beyond itself" (115). Thus conceived, consciousness introduces a hole or gap in being because it always exists at a temporal and, hence,

epistemological distance from itself. And yet, consciousness is nonetheless itself, and so the moment of consciousness that has just been, that is no longer identical with this present moment, is not completely foreign but instead partakes in a unity with other moments of consciousness that derives from perspectival continuity across diverse experiences. False consciousness and bad faith are thus alike because, to invoke Sartre's words, they both "[imply] in essence the unity of a *single* consciousness" (89). Only a consciousness whose content is temporally extended across a unified perspective can trick itself or obfuscate itself.

Sartre concludes that bad faith exists because fundamental ambiguities are present in the deepest structures of consciousness. The attitude plays with consciousness's back-and-forth movements between past and future, being-for-itself and being-for-others, and facticity and transcendence.³ For example, the student who laughs at racist jokes believes that he is not a racist because he disassociates his identity from these individual actions. But he will also recall those nonracist actions that he has performed in the past in order to substantiate his conclusion. He thus appeals to whatever pole of consciousness suits him at the time. If past actions suggest a certain negative character, then he will look to his future possibilities. If another's conception of him condemns him, then he will call upon his own conception of himself. If his possibilities for transcendence implicate a change from a state that is presently serving his purposes well, he will emphasize the factual and historical circumstances of his existence or his "facticity." In sum, "the primitive project of bad faith is only the utilization of this self-destruction of the fact of consciousness" (1956, 115).

We can now see that the feminist account of false consciousness and Sartre's notion of bad faith are both styles of consciousness that are each structured by two modes or poles. The embrace of one mode at the expense of the other makes possible the phenomena of denying or ignoring one's own knowledge and desires (in the case of false consciousness) and that of lying to oneself (in the case of bad faith). In comparing these two kinds of consciousness, we can also see why Sartre's examples draw from oppressive contexts: if a person's situation is such that in order for him to make himself be (*se faire être*), he must make himself his function to others, then he will be more prone to exploit the ambiguities of consciousness to his favor than are those others who have access to numerous and varied means to make themselves be. Absent a true escape from the situation, a consciousness that seeks to express its freedom will pursue the only escapes that are available: denial, obfuscation, and bad faith. To be sure, oppressors also benefit from living in false consciousness and acting in bad faith since such reductions of the ambiguity and complexity of existence serve to sediment and perpetuate the oppressive system. But the oppressor's assumption of these attitudes seems qualitatively different than that of the oppressed

at least in one respect: whereas the former assumes bad faith *in spite of* other options, the latter acts in bad faith because it is the only option. Insofar as this is the case, it is not that the oppressor and oppressed possess different kinds of consciousness when unequal distributions of bad faith or false consciousness arise; it is just that material conditions encourage some groups of people to engage the universal ambiguities of consciousness differently than others.

I now turn to consider two descriptions of consciousness that, in contrast to false consciousness and bad faith, challenge the idea that the structure of consciousness is universal among all beings, especially in contexts of oppression.

3. DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND BODY-SPECIFICITY

In systems of oppression such as slavery, colonialism, racism, and sexism, a kind of consciousness emerges that seems to contradict the Sartrean idea, which trails a deep history in modern philosophy from Descartes and Locke to Husserl and James, that all consciousness proceeds from the unity of a single perspective. For example, W. E. B. Du Bois describes black men in America at the turn of the twentieth century as having a "double-consciousness" that stems from living the tension between experiencing oneself as an active and capable American and, at the same time, being seen by others as essentially ignorant, foreign, and un-American. He writes, "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (1997, 3).

Fanon echoes Du Bois's descriptions of a consciousness that is multiple rather than singular in his phenomenological account of black lived experience. Fanon agrees with Merleau-Ponty and Sartre that in non-pathological experience a person equates his experiential perspective with his body. But he also observes that in a racist and colonialist world, the black man is not allowed to follow this normal course of development. Instead, "consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness" (1967, 110). Not only does Fanon not experience his body as entirely his own, but he also does not experience his *perspective* as his own; his is a consciousness made for him by the white man "who had woven [him] out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111).⁴ Subject to racist gestures and gazes, Fanon finds that his own "corporeal schema has crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema" (112). Fanon repeatedly likens this third-person consciousness to an amputation, wherein a part of his own perspective is forever absent in the flow of experience. Just as the amputated limb is removed from the rest of the body, racism and colonialism make it so that the black man is never

the “first” person in his own experience. Lewis Gordon aptly explains, “What antiblack racism demands of the black body is for it ... to be a body without perspective” (1995, 102). This condition can be limiting because it not only impedes the adoption of entire sets of practical orientations and future projects that would be necessary for transcendence but also affects the structure of consciousness, including the temporal synthesis and continuity of experience.

More recently, María Lugones articulates a pluralistic ontology that sees subjectivity as fundamentally multiple. Unlike Du Bois and Fanon, however, she rejects the idea that perspectival multiplicity is representative of an underdeveloped, distorted, or disintegrated subjectivity. Lugones instead maintains that the ontological plurality of oppressed/resistant beings confers a kind of epistemic privilege; in their multiplicity, they are able to perceive more of reality than those who are only able to see in fixed and reduced forms. Even further, Lugones suggests that if anything is abnormal and pathological about consciousness, it is the Western, colonizing drive toward “univocal sense” (2003, 19) and a monolithic perspective that seeks to stabilize or deny the inherent multiplicity of consciousness. On this point, Sartre and Lugones would be in agreement. Contrary to Sartre, however, Lugones would locate Sartre’s view that the structure of consciousness is both singular and universal as part and parcel of this reductive and colonizing drive.

Lugones’s ontology entails that a person is “a plurality of selves,” each of which is tied to a certain instantiation of reality that she calls a “‘world’ of sense” (2003, 93). The multiple consciousnesses within an individual bear little, if any, resemblance to one another, and their existences are often mutually exclusive, the enactment of one rendering the enactment of the other impossible. For example, Lugones describes the experience of being a self who is playful in certain social and political configurations that recognize her subjectivity and being a self who is decidedly not playful in oppressive situations that acknowledge her existence only in virtue of what she is instrumentally for those in power. It is not right to say that she is *one* self who can be either playful or serious depending on context because playfulness is not even a potential or a possible characteristic for the self who, as a matter of survival, must remain serious and vigilant in the racist world. Likewise, Fanon cannot live himself as both a doctor (a contributing member of society) and a cannibal (a destroyer of society) at the same time, for one perspective negates the other. Consistent with Fanon’s account, Lugones’s theory implies that whenever a first-person perspective is adopted by one self, the other self is viewed from a third-person perspective. A singular subject of experience is therefore not required by her descriptions and the unity of consciousness is never guaranteed. Rather, she insists that being true to the phenomenon of plurality as it is experienced by oppressed-resistant beings entails that we admit that “one does not experience any underlying I” (2003, 90).⁵

The phenomenon of double consciousness as it is described here thus makes a radical break with traditional phenomenological accounts of consciousness because a double consciousness is one that is not fundamentally unified, however minimally this unity is understood.⁶ The underlying structure of double consciousness cannot be one that is unified by an invariant first-personal perspective as it is in Sartre’s ontology because double consciousness is constituted by the co-presence of at least two different perspectives.⁷ Although false consciousness and bad faith are each composed of multiple modes that introduce a necessary opacity into consciousness that would in turn allow for certain types of self-concealment and self-deception, the nature of this opacity is fundamentally different than the one that arises in double consciousness. Rather than a temporal extension or a “nothingness” that distances consciousness from itself, double consciousness is inhabited by a *fullness* or *plenum* of perspectives that prevents any one perspective from assuming total self-possession. Double consciousness therefore cannot consist in a lie to oneself, for one conscious perspective does not have first-personal access to the other. For this reason, double consciousness, in contrast to bad faith, is potentially sincere.

This interpretation of double consciousness gives fresh meaning to Fanon’s claim that “ontology ... does not permit us to understand the being of the black man.” Double consciousness is not universal to any body, but pertains to those consciousnesses that arise out of the situation of the black body; in this way, double consciousness exhibits body-specificity. False consciousness and bad faith limit the influence of material conditions either to the content of consciousness or to the situation that facilitates how a given consciousness will be lived. But double consciousness explores the possibility that material and social factors can also alter the very structure of consciousness. In order to address some of the ontological concerns that follow the concept of double consciousness, we should finally examine a specific type of double consciousness that Beauvoir develops in *The Second Sex* called *se faire objet*.

4. SE FAIRE OBJET: A SECONDARY CONSCIOUSNESS

The second volume of *The Second Sex* titled “Lived Experience” (*L’expérience vécue*) assumes an explicitly phenomenological approach to the subject matter of woman. Unlike the first volume that studies the objective being of woman as it is seen from the third-person perspectives of biology, psychoanalysis, historical materialism, and literature, the second volume “describe[s] the world from woman’s point of view such as it is offered to her” (2009, 17).⁸ In attending to a woman’s own point of view, Beauvoir aims to reveal a phenomenological “common ground” among women that does not depend on

essentialism, causal determinism, or nominalism (2009, 279). She looks to a woman's experience, not so that she can take the sum total of these experiences or that she can identify general patterns that would admit of exceptions, but so that she can expose those existential structures that seem to be present in each and every instance of the phenomenon. The kind of structure that she uncovers emerges in the differences between the consciousnesses of the child, girl, and woman as Beauvoir describes them, especially in terms of the way each of these beings exists her body.

Beauvoir first observes that the consciousness of a child, no matter which sex, is best characterized by living one's body as, referencing Merleau-Ponty's phrase, "a natural subject." (2009, n41).⁹ This means that the body is coincident with the child's point of view on the world; it constitutes her perspective. Just as the word *child* could denote either a girl or a boy, this kind of subjectivity is both universal and androgynous. Beauvoir explains, "For girls and boys, the body is first the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that makes possible the comprehension of the world; children apprehend the universe through their eyes and hands, and not through their sexual parts" (2009, 283). The child's consciousness exists itself as coincident with her lived body at the same time that it is capable of transcending its present state toward an open future. Beauvoir's description of the child's consciousness thus closely parallels Sartre's ontological conception of consciousness in general.

As the child grows into an adolescent girl and experiences puberty, she is faced with a social situation that promises to change the way she lives her body. In sexist society, the active expression of freedom is opposed to the expression of femininity and vice versa. Beauvoir explains,

For man, there is no hiatus between public and private life: the more he asserts his grasp on the world through action and work, the more virile he looks; human and vital characteristics are merged in him; but women's own successes are in contradiction with her femininity since the "real woman" is required to make herself an object [*se faire objet*], to be the Other. (2009, 273–74)

The situation of sexist oppression therefore demands that a girl choose between making herself be (*se faire être*) and making herself a woman (*se faire femme*).¹⁰ The parameters of this situation thus encourage the girl to assume an additional stance toward her body. In addition to existing her body as her point of view, the girl also lives her body as "foreign" or "alien" since its worth comes from its role in fulfilling the desires of others. Because boys express their masculinity through their capacities for action and self-expression, the identity between body and subjectivity that they lived as children remains intact throughout adolescence. Alternatively, Beauvoir describes the kind of divided consciousness that underlies a girl's experience:

For the girl, erotic transcendence consists in making herself prey [*se faire proie*] in order to gain her ends. She becomes [*devenir*] an object, and she grasps herself [*se saisir*] as an object; she is surprised to discover this new aspect of her being: it seems to her that she has doubled herself [*se dédoubler*]; instead of coinciding exactly with herself, here she is existing *outside* of herself. (2009, 349)

Whereas the child's consciousness is entirely structured by a body that is the radiation of self and her instrument of comprehension, the girl foresees a future where she must live a body that is also the instrument through which men fulfill *their* projects in the world. However, temporally speaking, this fate looms in the future and has not yet been realized. The girl therefore still feels the independence of childhood at the same time that she infers this mutilating future; her consciousness is thus split between experiencing her body as the locus of subjectivity and the impending destiny of her body being an instrument or object for others. Unlike the requirements of masculinity that solidify the boy's association of his body and his subjectivity, the fulfillment of femininity "imperiously modifies [the girl's] consciousness of herself" (2009, 301).

To become a woman on Beauvoir's account is to realize the kind of consciousness that was prefigured in the girl's doubled consciousness—to become a woman is *se faire objet*. A woman achieves *se faire objet* by placing herself in a space where she can realize her body as conduit for another's subjectivity. In sexist society such spaces include heterosexual sex, marriage, and pregnancy, among others. For example, Beauvoir claims that a "woman's love is one of the forms of experience in which a consciousness makes itself an object [*se faire objet*] for a being who transcends it" (2009, 305). *Se faire objet* is a kind of double consciousness where a woman exists her body in at least two different ways at the same time. Her body is both the locus of her subjectivity and the instrument of another's desires; it is jointly that which she lives as her own and that which she lives as if it were someone else's. This is the meaning of Beauvoir's incisive observation that "woman like man is her body, but her body is something other than herself."

Like double consciousness, *se faire objet* is a structure of consciousness that is body-specific. Only beings whose bodies are marked in the social landscape as feminine and therefore situated in opposition to *se faire être* can realize *se faire objet*. Double consciousness and *se faire objet* are thus both secondary and derivative structures of consciousness that emerge out of the logic and constraints of an oppressive situation. As a result, the concepts of double consciousness and *se faire objet* allow for body-specific variability in the way consciousness is structured. These forms of consciousness are therefore most unlike false consciousness and bad faith, which proceed according

to a structure that is both universal across all beings and immune to changes ushered by the material and social conditions of oppression. Beauvoir's articulation of *se faire objet*, in particular, points toward a way to resolve some of the ontological difficulties that accompany such an admission because she traces each perspective in consciousness and thus each different structure of consciousness to a way that consciousness lives its body.¹¹ If it is possible to hold more (or less) than one perspective in consciousness as a result of the way oppression enables beings to exist their bodies, then it is possible to have more than one ontological structure of consciousness. Indeed, acknowledging the malleability of the structure of consciousness is a logical consequence of the belief that the perspectival nature of consciousness is fundamentally bodily, that is, constitutively tied, not merely to the objective body, but also to the phenomenal body as it is lived and experienced.

Despite their marked similarities, there is an important difference between the double consciousness that Du Bois and Fanon describe and Beauvoir's notion of *se faire objet*. Namely, whereas the former consciousness doubles due to the racist practice of inscribing the black body in a third-person perspective, *se faire objet* is a consciousness that *doubles itself*. Beauvoir writes, "To make oneself an object [*se faire objet*], to make oneself passive, is completely different from *being* a passive object: a woman lover is neither asleep nor dead; there is a surge in her which unceasingly ebbs and flows; this ebbing surge creates the spell that perpetuates desire" (2009, 390). The double perspective that constitutes *se faire objet* comes precisely from living one's body as one's own subjectivity and as that of another *at the same time*. The hallmark of a woman's consciousness is the inescapability of this ambiguity; try as she might, a woman will never succeed in embracing one of the perspectives present in her consciousness to the exclusion of the other. This is the tragedy of oppression: it happens to consciousnesses that cannot eradicate their capacities for transcendence and that are always poised to express their freedom.

But if *se faire objet* is a choice and an expression of a subjectivity, it is not one that is necessarily made in bad faith. Not only is the structure of double consciousness incompatible with the singularity of consciousness needed to support bad faith, but the trick present within *se faire objet* seems to occur on the side of the world rather than on the side of consciousness. With *se faire objet*, consciousness does not exploit the inevitability of its own transcendence in order to avoid transcendence; it instead divides precisely because it has attempted transcendence within a set of options that is both too narrow and too doomed due to sexist oppression. In most cases, the girl even foresees that her pursuit of *se faire objet* is bound to fail. Insofar as she possesses this foresight, *se faire objet* is unlike the false consciousness described by feminists where a girl would confuse the dictates of oppression with her own

desires. That she makes herself an object anyway testifies not to her denial of her existential situation, but to her astute perception of the dearth of better alternatives. Beauvoir sees the difference as follows: "She does not have the means to create another society, yet she does not agree with this one. Halfway between revolt and slavery, she unwillingly resigns herself to masculine authority" (2009, 651).

In this brief study of the varieties of consciousness under oppression, we begin to gain a sense of the differing ontological landscapes that would render each variety possible as well as the multiple ways that a situation of oppression can affect the consciousnesses that inhabit that situation. False consciousness and bad faith seem to follow a traditional ontological picture that sees consciousness as structurally singular in a necessary way. Any kind of differences or commonalities among the consciousnesses of members of the same social group like women, laborers, or homosexuals must therefore be explained either in terms of patterns in the experiential content of consciousness as it is in feminist consciousness or in regard to variations in the conditions facilitating the assumption of one attitude of consciousness over another as with the case of bad faith. By contrast, the phenomena of double consciousness and *se faire objet* pose a new ontological vision wherein the very structure of consciousness varies according to the different manners of living one's body that are possible for an oppressed being. These last two varieties are thus body-specific and secondary structures of consciousness that are catalyzed only when a being pursues freedom amid the constraints of a particular oppression.

Through the juxtaposition and comparison of these four types of consciousness, we are able to identify aspects of phenomenological ontology that warrant further scrutiny, such as the purported singularity of consciousness and its purported *structural* immunity to social and material conditions. If genuinely entertained, the possibility that consciousness does not possess a singular structure would in turn shake the traditional phenomenological reliance on the first-personal perspective to its foundations since phenomenologists can no longer assume that the everyday consciousness that is their raw material is continuous and unified. But it would also open phenomenology (and philosophy more generally) to the possibility of genuine diversity not simply in its content but in its manner of thinking. Moreover, insofar as phenomenology wishes to twist free of Cartesianism once and for all, then it must take seriously the idea that more than one bodily perspective may arise in consciousness as a result of particular conditions like oppression. This possibility in turn raises the pressing questions of which structures of consciousness are most conducive to the expression of freedom and of how these structures can be attained. If such an evolution of phenomenology is possible, then phenomenology's lasting relevance to contemporary political movements will be starkly clear.

NOTES

1. For more detail, see Meyerson's discussion (1991, 5–8).
2. See Bartky (1975, 437) and MacKinnon (1989, 108, 115–16) for specific uses of the phrase "false consciousness."
3. This interpretation indicates my agreement with what has recently been called "the multiplicity view" of bad faith (Elwyn 2012).
4. See also Yancy (2008), who refers to this phenomenon "the return of the black body."
5. For accounts that attempt to transgress the ontologically problematic nature of this claim, see Ortega (2001, 2016), Barvosa (2008), and McWeeny (2010).
6. It is doubtful that Gordon would understand double consciousness as structurally different in kind from other types of consciousness because he believes that there is no differentiation and thus no personalization at the most basic level of consciousness: "There is no, at the basic ontological level of consciousness of transphenomenal Being, black nor white consciousness" (Gordon 1995, 131).
7. I have modified all but a few of Borde and Malovany-Chevalier's translations in the citations of *The Second Sex* that follow.
8. See also Zahavi (2005).
9. The full reference is as follows: "I am my body, at least insofar as I possess experience, and, reciprocally, my body is as it were a natural subject, a provisional sketch of my total being" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 205, translation modified).
10. For relevant passages where Beauvoir uses these formulations, see Beauvoir (2009, 515; 2009, 376).
11. For another version of this solution that draws on Merleau-Ponty's notion of operative intentionality, see McWeeny (2010, 308–309).

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