Spirit of Seriousness and Bad Faith. On the Meaning of In-game Life

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> Perhaps there is no other choice; perhaps one has to choose:
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> to be nothing, or to play oneself.
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> It would be horrible: such a natural falsehood.[1]

TAGS: Meaning, Sartre, Existentialism, Bad Faith, Spirit of Seriousness, Life-Game Parallel, Ontology of Player-Game Relationship

The paper concentrates on the process of meaning-making in "life situation" and "gameplay situation". It explores an experience of meaningfulness and significance or existential meaning. The argument is limited to adventure games led by the example of "Vanishing of Ethan Carter"[2] (VoEC). The study will be informed by existential phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre elucidated mainly in "Being and Nothingness"[3]. Focusing on an ontology of a "gameplay situation", this paper does not propose a framework for game research, but explores a naive player's[4] situation "inside" a game, or a hedonistic[5] framework for playing. The "gameplay situation" as one of possible situations that can arise between a human being and a game[6], outlines a relationship between an avatar experienced as self, i.e.

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[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Drogi wolności*, trans. Julian Rogoziński (Zielona Sowa, 2005), 140. All quotes in languages other than English have been translated by the author.

[2] The Astronauts, *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, PC, 2014, http://ethancartergame.com/.

[3] Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1978).

[4] Analogically to a "naïve reader"; see: Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Indiana University Press, 1994), 55.

[5] See: Olli Tapio Leino, 'Death Loop as a Feature', *Game Studies. The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 12, no. 2 (December 2012), http://gamestudies.org/1202/articles/death_loop_as_a_feature.

[6] Forms of misreading (see: e.g. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, USA, 1997); Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Umberto Eco et al., *Interpretacja i nadinterpretacja*, trans. Tomasz Bieroń (Wydawn. Znak, 2008).), uncovering the illusion created by the game, in other words, strategies of reading a game "against" the game. E.g. "research situation" when a researcher does not play the game but examines its features; "contemplative situation" when a person act as voyeur or tourist in a gameworld; the situations combines position of a person towards an avatar and towards the gameworld, but are not "styles of play" that can be performed in many "situations". See: Richard Bartle, 'Players Who Suit MUDs', 1996, http://mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm.

self-avatar, to the meaningful gameworld. I explore the ways in which the "gameplay situation" differs from the relationship between a human being and her everyday world.

The notions of *bad faith*[7] and *spirit of seriousness*[8] are especially important for the comparison between "life situation" and "gameplay situation". Sartre uses them to name two different defence strategies used by individuals to ease the tension of responsibility. Therefore, in life, *spirit of seriousness* and *bad faith* conceal the fact that human beings are free. They are described by Sartre as misleading and harmful beliefs about an individual's position in the world and about source of meaning of her actions. However, introduced into game analysis, I argue that they can provide an interesting *ontological* framework for a relationship between the self-avatar and the gameworld.

Why do I claim that meaning of in-game activities is rooted in *bad faith* and *spirit of seriousness*? How is the meaning given to in-game actions different from those performed in life, when considering characteristics of an individual, a world and facticity - which is, according to Sartre[9], individual's position in the world determining her point of view?

To answer such questions I compare the meaning of *bad faith* and *spirit of seriousness* in situations of life and a game. Firstly, I need to mark a condition and features of an individual's position in the world she perceives. I will outline how, according to Sartre, meaning is created in a "life situation" and ways it depends on an overall existential project of an individual and on her attitude to the world. Then, I will apply underlying assumptions of his ontology to a "gameplay situation" to explore how such meaning relies on the position of a self-avatar and her attitude to the gameworld.

1. Meaning of Life: Free Human Beings in an Absurd World

What does the process of meaning-making entail for human beings? In the existential philosophy of Sartre, the world lacks meaning. Therefore, the world is not able to support meanings an individual gives to their life. Not only is she completely free to start the process of meaning-making, but is also completely responsible for who she is and how she acts. Sartre

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[7] For the notion of *bad faith* see: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 44-45, 47-70, 628. For its application to game studies see: Leino, 'Death Loop as a Feature.'

[8] For the notion of *spirit of seriousness* see: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 39, 580, 626-627, 633.

[9] See: Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1978), 512.

presents freedom-oriented extremism claiming that meaning of life is a matter of individual choice: "All these trivial passive expectations of the real, all these commonplace, everyday values, derive their meaning from an original projection of myself which stands as my choice of myself in the world"[10], he writes. It is a matter of the particular existential project whereby every individual meaning-making is grounded in freedom.

Sartrean understanding of freedom is far from the everyday use of the term. Freedom is not understood here as a possibility of choosing between options presented. For example, I decide to become an actress, a diver, or, a philosopher. Freedom here is understood as "a relation to the given"[11], namely as a possibility of negation. Sartrean freedom turns out to be the fundamental characteristics of human being, as it describes an attitude of an existential project of the human being to the world. Human "being" is nothingness, and it cannot cease to be free[12].

Therefore, a human being does not have any essence: it is a project, never ending longing for something it was in the past or wants to become. While an individual is nothingness, a chasm in being which, because of its otherness, is able to freely interact with the world, the world is indifferent fullness and being. Therefore, it is not possible to answer the question what is the meaning of this tree without reference to human being. Because the meaning of this tree as a source of inspiration, or a firewood, depends on project one connects with this tree. Hence, this is freedom what constitutes meaning of the world: intentions, actions, and their interpretation.

Nevertheless, the free consciousness always finds herself within the indifferent world as being thrown[13] into a particular situation she is facing from a particular point of view. Sartre adds that:

"Each man finds himself in the presence of meanings which do not come into the world through him. He arises in a world which is given to him as already looked-at, furrowed, explored, worked over in all its meanings, and whose very contexture is already defined by these investigations"[14].

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 486.

[12] See: Ibid., 485–6.

[13] See: Ibid., 39.

[14] Ibid., 520.

This involvement of consciousness is facticity:

"Without facticity consciousness could choose its attachments to the world in the same way as the souls in Plato's Republic choose their condition. I could determine myself to "be born a worker" or to "be born a bourgeois." But on the other hand facticity cannot constitute me as being a bourgeois or being a worker. It is not even strictly speaking a resistance of fact […]. Facticity is only one indication which I give myself of the being to which I must reunite myself in order to be what I am"[15].

By establishing an individual's relationship to the world, facticity does not take away the burden of freedom. Even if the conventional deed is experienced as motivated or imposed upon by demands of the particular situation, it needs to be freely chosen by an individual as her own way of acting. Therefore, any act becomes justified by itself; it does not become better, worse, innocent, or meaningless. Moreover, an individual cannot cease to take full responsibility for this act.

In Sartre, understanding of individual's own, unconditioned nothingness and inescapable freedom is then the only source of deep and authentic sense of meaning. Additionally, being aware of this freedom causes anguish as nobody and nothing is given as just meaningful[16]. Sartrean existentialism is the philosophy of difficult freedom since it considers an individual as absolutely responsible[17]. In consequence, as he writes in "Roads to Freedom", "Everyone! Everyone! Everyone runs away: Schwartz veers away, Nippert sleeps, and Pinnete goes mad […]. Each of them quickly doctored for himself an attitude that will help him to survive"[18]. All of these "life-giving" meanings derive from *bad faith*; they are believed in for their calming effect. The hardship of bearing responsibility for freedom is the reason for a common presence of defence mechanisms: *bad faith* and *spirit of seriousness*. They conceal freedom and anguish and help individuals to perceive their actions, as well as the surrounding world, as justified and meaningful[19].

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[15] Ibid., 83.

[16] See: Ibid., 29–34.

[17] See, e.g. Ibid., 509., Ilham Dilman, *Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (Routledge, 2013), 199.

[18] Sartre, *Drogi wolności*, 585.

[19] See: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 556.

2. Meaning of a Gameworld: There is no Place for the Absurd in *Spirit of Seriousness*

"My freedom? It hangs over me: I am free for so many years and nothing comes from it. I am dying with desire to exchange this freedom for doubtlessness, just once"[20].

Do the defence mechanisms of *bad faith* and *spirit of seriousness* work also while playing a game? If they do, how are they manifested? Building on the Sartrean ontology of the human condition, I will make an attempt to outline a condition of a self-avatar[21] in adventure games characterized by an absence of a condition of losing a game. Firstly, I would like to point out the differences between Sartrean world, into which human beings are thrown, and the gameworld. I would like to limit the application of the Sartrean ontology to this genre, as I think that narrowing the field will allow me to explore it in more detail. Thus, I will focus on "Vanishing of Ethan Carter" by The Astronauts[22], the adventure game with a first person perspective taking place within a three-dimensional environment.

The game, before I run it, is for me just an object in the world[23]. I am free in relation to it: I can turn it on or not. When I make a decision and start the game, I feel that an adventure begins. The place I can observe now looks realistic. When I turn back my avatar, I notice an entrance to the tunnel. Led by curiosity, I run inside - what will I find on the opposite side of the tunnel that I just, apparently, left? I run in the darkness to find myself back in the same place. This is the three-dimensional landscape that closely resembles Karkonosze[24]. It reminds me of a well-known setting outside the game but I can hear a voice

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[20] Sartre, *Drogi wolności*, 99.

[21] I make an attempt to answer the question similar to the one Olli Tapio Leino asked in his doctoral thesis, that is, "how can we describe the materiality of the single-player game artefact as shaping and constraining the ways in which the player experiences game content as significant?" Olli Tapio Leino, 'Emotions In Play: On the Constitution of Emotion in Solitary Computer Game Play' (IT University of Copenhagen, 2010), 8, https://www.itu.dk/en/.../4F830FB2D733480CB04557782743CA5C.ashx.. However, the vital difference is that while he claims that the experience of the player stems from the *materiality* of the game, the "naked, indifferent *materiality* [MMK] which no longer has any relation to me" Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 591., I argue that this is *facticity*, that is, the predesigned position and point of view on the gameworld that makes me experience it as meaningful.

[22] The Astronauts, *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*.

[23] See: Leino, 'Emotions In Play: On the Constitution of Emotion in Solitary Computer Game Play', 273. While the player is not subjected to a gameplay condition, "the stack of cards remains yet another feature in the contingency of the world".

[24] The Astronauts, 'Ethan Carter, Karkonosze and Wisconsin', 18 February 2014, http://theastrocrew.tumblr.com/post/77078540061/ethan-carter-karkonosze-and-wisconsin.

of a narrator explaining that I am in Red Creek Valley, in the world, where Ethan Carter vanished. Unknown evil gathers here. There are portals connecting different worlds; a sensual one, and a second, mysterious one. Therefore, the game introduces me to a different facticity: a new facticity in the world where abandoned buildings are inhabited by dark forces, and murder weapons, when arranged in proper places, turns back time allowing me to see crucial stop-motion scenes from the crime.

If it were a "life situation", I would have to make a free decision in what to do. But I think that a "gameplay situation" provides an escape from the necessity of taking responsibility for an individual's actions and choices. Adventure games could then fulfil the longing for doubtlessness, which is one of the basic human needs from the point of view of Sartrean existentialism. In a "gameplay situation",

Each of my choices, every act of intentional direction toward the world is morally and ontologically well-grounded, it has vital justification coming from outside. Therefore, all the relationships (self-world, self-things), meanings, values, senses are not created by my freedom […], but are given to me as already established order[25].

This is how Piotr Mróz described the *spirit of seriousness*, that is, the defence strategy used by people overburdened by responsibility caused by their freedom. *The spirit of seriousness* supports an individual's belief that the meaning of life can be derived from, or even inscribed into the world. It leads to a conclusion that rules and meanings observed and experienced in the world, only because of their presence, defines and justifies individual endeavours. In the *spirit of seriousness*,

Man pursues being blindly by hiding from himself the free project which is this pursuit. He makes himself such that he is *waited* for by all the tasks placed along his way. Objects are mute demands, and he is nothing in himself but the passive obedience to these demands[26].

In *spirit of seriousness* the meaning of an individual's actions are then perceived by this individual as given by the features of the world, as being derived straight from the

[25] Piotr Mróz, 'Posłowie', in *Byt I Nicość: Zarys Ontologii Fenomenologicznej*, by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Jan Kiełbasa and Piotr Mróz, Wielkie Dzieła Filozoficzne (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zielona Sowa, 2007), 783.

[26] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 626.

facticity.

In "life situation", according to Sartre, an individual and the world are on opposite poles: they are the two kinds of being which are as different as possible. The consciousness, or, human freedom, undertakes endeavours to conceal this fact. In order to feel safer, she tries to humanise the world, to make it both understandable and meaningful. This is why everything, that which is given, such as socially and culturally set meanings, are usually perceived as "natural things"[27].

I think that a "gameplay situation" does not constitute such poles: there is nothing absurd and there is no freedom, as they stay behind the scope of the "gameplay situation". Then the moment I make the decision of turning the game on becomes the moment when I enter the self-avatar's facticity in the gameworld[28]. Every player will find herself in this facticity and her situation will be determined by it. She will find the set of in-game meanings with no relation to her individual freedom, but related to self-avatar instead. Interpretation of this new facticity depends, obviously, on knowledge and interpretative skills of the player.

The game sustains an experience of the self-avatar "being *waited* for by all the tasks placed along his way". The game support a sense of meaning and purpose of actions I take, as a proper performance is rewarded and intuitive within the predetermined role. Moreover, it sustains a conviction that the obstacles offered by a gameworld are "mute demands"[29] designed to mirror abilities of the self-avatar[30]. And in fact, they are.

As I pointed out previously[31], life turns into an adventure while playing a game. Actions are interwoven with a designed narrative distinctive to games. Games create obstacles: but not this kind of obstacles against which *my own* freedom can be realized[32]. It would be the case if the gameworld were an absurd world, where human endeavours are

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[27] Ibid., 427.

[28] For a notion of an "extended facticity" see: Leino, 'Emotions In Play: On the Constitution of Emotion in Solitary Computer Game Play', 11, 187, 220-1, 282.

[29] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 626.

[30] For a notion of "hybrid intentionality", where "The hybrid intentionality originating in the symbiosis of the game artefact and the player is directed at the extended facticity" Leino, 'Emotions In Play: On the Constitution of Emotion in Solitary Computer Game Play', 187., see: also Ibid., 277\}; Daniel Vella, 'Player and Figure: An Analysis of a Scene in Kentucky Route Zero', in *Proceedings of Nordic DiGRA 2014 Conference*, 2014.

[31] Marta Matylda Kania, 'Between "Live" and "Tell": The Suspension of Freedom' (Draft of the paper presented at The Philosophy of Computer Games Conference, Istanbul, 2014), http://gamephilosophy2014.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Kania-2014.-Between-Live-and-Tell.-PCG2014.pdf.

[32] I make my argument in the context of Leino's analysis in: Leino, 'Emotions In Play: On the Constitution of Emotion in Solitary Computer Game Play', 130–131.

unjustified. Conversely, I think that a "gameplay situation" creates obstacles which limit a player's freedom, as they set the limit for *her own* meaning-making. This is the consequence of the kernel of the "gameplay situation", where the absurd gameworld is not hidden beneath the *spirit of seriousness* of the player: there is no absurd and indifferent world in the game.

The gameworld is not absurd, but purposeful. Its meaning is predesigned and inscribed into it, and can be perceived only as factual while taking a position of the self-avatar. Even if an experienced meaning at a particular moment is limited to some kind of atmosphere, all the gameworld is here to create this ambiance. While playing VoEC I follow paths designed to lead me to places I should visit. I keep finding, by sheer coincidence, half-burned newspapers containing crucial information. On a table in an abandoned house pieces of paper are placed filled with childish hand-writing. The short story illustrates the mystery I try to understand.

VoEC also presents more innovative ways to support my *spirit of seriousness*. Instead of being informed about actions I should perform, I am led by suggestions in a form of cloud based question tags. When I am getting closer to any important object, I can investigate it. For example, when getting closer to a railway car I can see questions – "Blood… Human? Animal? Murder? Used recently?"[33]. As if questions a detective should ask himself were hidden in the investigated object in this hyperreal world. Questions do not destroy the impression of the meaning hidden in the object itself as they do not refer to a story which happened in the past, but to my current position towards this object and perceivable signs of the crime.

Last but not least, the most interesting facet of the VoEC world are flashbacks from the past. They are depicted and resonant in the different layers of the in-game world, awaiting me to reveal them. They allow me to watch the events on the crime scene, when I manage to collect and put together all the necessary objects and "touch" a body of the victim. Such are exemplified as visions caused by the special gift of the self-avatar that uncovers mysterious meanings hidden in the gameworld.

Contrary to life, the game provides an explanation of actions I need to take. It imposes onto me a meaning of the situation, into which I am thrown as self-avatar. Who, then, is the actor of the in-game endeavours, on whom these meanings are imposed, and whose actions are justified?

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[33] The Astronauts, *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*.

3. Meaning of the Player: As Self-Avatar I am in *Bad Faith*

"I was assailed by memories of a life that wasn't mine anymore, but one in which I'd found the simplest and most lasting joys"[34].

In the everyday world, a source of meaning of an existential project is always a human being. Individual meaning-making is then performed "from inside", even if the justification of one's actions is erroneously ascribed to the world. In the framework of Sartre's philosophy, the need for meaning and personal "destiny" can never be satisfied without concealing freedom. A human being in the world is always *in statu nascendi*; due to its ontological status, it never achieves its final shape and cannot aptly attribute to herself a kind of meaning that non-human objects and others have. This causes an anguish, a feeling of groundlessness that needs to be helped.

"This desire, to act like a mechanism driven by external causes, to become only and solely one's single function, a trait, a role, is one of the forms of *bad faith*, or in other words, one of the ways the human being escapes its freedom"[35].

The term "*bad faith*" designates here a conviction that one is determined by and limited to a performed role. Nevertheless, this self-constraint is not experienced as a role anymore. *Bad faith* is a form of a false and powerful self-identification of a free human being. It takes place when a human comes to believe that she is an object or mechanism that cannot be changed nor modified. People acting in *bad faith* are best illustrated by characters in Sartre's "Roads of Freedom": Brunet that has "given up his freedom, he was just a soldier"[36], the barman who "was overly a barman"[37]. "Perhaps there is no other choice; perhaps one has to choose: to be nothing, or to play oneself. It would be horrible: such a natural falsehood"[38],

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[34] Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Matthew Ward, 1st Edition, 44th Printing edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 104.

[35] Robert Mitoraj, 'Na drogach złej wiary', in *Drogi wolności*, by Jean-Paul Sartre (Zielona Sowa, 2O05), 768.

[36] Sartre, *Drogi wolności*, 97.

[37] Ibid., 140.

[38] Ibid.

wonders Mathieu Delarue who is obsessed by freedom.

I argue that in a "gameplay situation" one has a choice, namely, not to enter a gameplay, or to *self-constrain* and act as an avatar, that is, to play somebody one is *not*. Therefore, a *bad faith* can be explained not only as a description of a misperception of the human condition. In a "gameplay situation", *bad faith* becomes ontological characteristics of self-avatar's condition. When the player accepts the avatar's position as herself, she perceives it in a "subjective relation of self"[39]. This point of view becomes a basis for meaning-making in a game.

This supplies a framework of the "gameplay situation" with characteristics of an actor. As long as the player acts as a self-avatar, she does not experience a game as related to her freedom. In consequence, the process of in-game meaning-making does not take place between an in-game facticity and freedom of the player, but is referred to an objectified role of the self-avatar the player identifies with.

In VoEC, I perceive the gameworld from a first person perspective. I begin an adventure as almost *carte blanche*, as just a gaze. But during the gameplay I develop understanding of a self-avatar also as a character and movement, among others[40]. As self-avatar I find myself in the woods of an uncanny Red Creek Valley. I become a listener of "my inner" monologue that shapes my perspective[41]. The voice of the narrator, that is, "my" thoughts create a synchronic commentary for the situation I am in, unfolds my in-game facticity. As an experienced private eye investigating dark cases Paul Prospero that is, I am the detective who has solved many cases from the border of criminal and mystery. I answer a call from a missing boy, Ethan. I take the role which is proposed to me. Until now, in relation to the gameplay, I will be - as myself - "just a detective" looking for Ethan Carter, no matter how successful I am in my endeavours.

The barman who is "overly a barman"[42] makes every gesture a barman's gesture, referring to his conviction of himself as a barman. His behaviour is led by his *bad faith*, its appropriateness is set by the facticity of being a barman. Analogically, the player thinking of herself as a self-avatar and acting as one, is looking at the gameworld in *bad faith*, searching

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[39] Vella, 'Player and Figure: An Analysis of a Scene in Kentucky Route Zero.'

[40] For the model of player involvement see: Gordon Calleja, *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation*, 1 edition (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2011), 38.

[41] On model for the player-figure relation including inner dualism of an avatar figure see: Vella, 'Player and Figure: An Analysis of a Scene in Kentucky Route Zero.'

[42] Sartre, *Drogi wolności*, 140.

for what "just a detective" would search. Therefore, in a gameplay situation my actions are performed in a context of a mission I execute, that is, in a context of their relevance to the project of the self-avatar, my adventure and destiny.

In a life situation, a meaning of a barman's gesture is falsified by his *bad faith*. He can at any moment gain an awareness that he is a free human being. He can potentially quit his job, cease connecting meaning of his actions with his role and keep living his life.

In opposition to life, taking on this particular project of the self-avatar is justified by the gameworld which is composed around her facticity. When a player enters a "gameplay situation", her self-avatar appears in the gameworld always in a perfect moment and place. This is her adventure with a real beginning, "like a fanfare of trumpets, like the first notes of a jazz tune, cutting short tedium, making for continuity"[43], as Sartre writes in "Nausea". The self-avatar keeps playing a central role in the gameworld[44] as the gameplay becomes a fulfilment of this particular project and its changing facticity continuously supports its justification.

To experience an adventure, I act in *bad faith* as a self-avatar. I act in the *spirit of seriousness* while looking in the gameworld for justification to my acts. Therefore, as a naïve player in adventure games "I am not 'making myself' against the artifact as it exists, but assuming that there is a 'plan for my existence'"[45]. Leino calls this approach a "utilitarian mode of interpretation":

"While the utilitarian inauthentic attitude certainly is useful for me as a player, it distorts my interpretation, as it in fact implies a version of the "authorial intent fallacy"[46].

As long as I consider an experience of a "gameplay situation" to be an adventure, I ascertain it is closer to naïve mode of reading than to reverse-engineering of intentions held

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[43] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, ed. Alexander Lloyd (New York: New Directions, 2007), 36.

[44] Philosophical commentary to the central role of a player in a gameworld is commented by the game Stefano Gualeni, *Necessary Evil*, 2013g, http://evil.gua-le-ni.com/.; See also: Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 4. Comment on cybertext "<I want this text to tell *my* story; the story that *could not be* without me.> In some cases this is literally true. In other cases, perhaps most, the sense of individual outcome is illusory, but nevertheless the aspect of coercion and manipulation is real".

[45] Leino, 'Death Loop as a Feature.'

[46] Ibid.

by anyone else than the game itself[47]. The game is expected to be meaningful, but I do not think that it requires any further assumptions on a designer's intentions; they are and can be expressed only in the game the player interacts with (as long as she is not researching its wider sociocultural contexts while playing). Therefore, what is interpreted here are not the designer's intentions but the "game's intentions", as the game as a whole is not a natural object but an artifact we approach with some expectations, prior knowledge and experience[48]. Moreover, while the "distortion" of my interpretation can be harmful for research, it seems to be crucial for playing a game, or for entering a "gameplay situation".

When the player quits the position of *bad faith*, the "gameplay situation" is disturbed. The avatar is not perceived as self anymore as the player jumps off her avatar and assumes a different attitude towards a gameworld and to the game itself. Hence, she addresses a different situation. The game is not experienced as a field of living and acting and becomes a research field. The adventure disappears and becomes just a story, something that happened once upon the time and exists as being already told[49]. Therefore, the proposed application of Sartrean ontology is limited to a "gameplay situation" when the player objectifies herself in the avatar acting in *bad faith,* perceiving herself as being "just an avatar". As long as I perceive the unfolding gameplay as my own adventure, my gaze is merged with the gaze and agency of my avatar; I can act as the avatar or think of myself as of the avatar. The gameplay situation remains a personal experience of the different a meaning of in-game life, the different self in the extended facticity.

4. Conclusions: Appropriacy of the Gameworld and the Project of the Avatar

In life, human beings are able to reject *bad faith* and *spirit of seriousness* and authentically take responsibility for their freedom. But in a "gameplay situation" of an adventure game they are not, as long as *bad faith* and *spirit of seriousness* provide a frame for the ontological situation of the player engaged in a gameplay. The meaning of in-game life is

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[47] For discussion on a "psychological fallacy" see: death of the author, Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*., Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975)., authorial lie Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*., Agata Bielik-Robson, *The Saving Lie. Harold Bloom and Deconstruction* (Evanston, 2011), 79–82.

[48] When a book read by naïve reader lacks a page, she will, presumably, supplement the missing part of the story using her imagination to make it consistent, instead of thinking of writer's goal to omit this particular part of the story.

[49] See: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, ed. Alexander Lloyd (New York: New Directions, 2007), 36–38.

experienced in the *bad faith* when the player acts as a self-avatar, and in *spirit of seriousness,* as one perceives the meaning as being given to them. Therefore, in a "gameplay situation" the player is able to experience suspension of freedom and enjoy a delight of a lack of responsibility. It does not mean, though, that a performance in a gameplay situation does not require interpretation of a situation, efforts of imagination, or learning skills necessary to smoothly interact with the game.

When I take position of the self-avatar in *bad faith*, the gameworld becomes meaningful for me in the light of the project of my avatar. The facticity of this world, appropriacy of the avatar's project, causes the world to be experienced in the *spirit of seriousness* as fulfilling expectations, meaningful, and justifying my endeavours.

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