

---

**YU Chung-Chi**

# **THE HOPELESS QUEST FOR TAIWANESE IDENTITY**

**An Analysis of *Orphan of Asia*  
from Sartre's Perspective**

## **Introduction**

**169**

»Are you Chinese or Taiwanese, to which do you identify yourself?« such a question is quite often asked among people in Taiwan in the last two decades.<sup>1</sup> Indubitably this question counts as a major concern for the ordinary people and always has great impact on politics as a consequence. Wherein is my ethnic and cultural identity? Do I have to choose between alternatives or can the answer be multiple? How should I treat the difference between my own ethnic group and other groups? If we cannot avoid facing such questions, then taking up these questions with deep reflections would seem quite inevitable.

In the present paper I will approach this issue by bringing up the literary work, *Orphan of Asia*. This novel was written by Wu Zhuoliu, finished short before the end of the Second World War, the time when Taiwan was still a colony of Japan. I will also use Sartre's existential thought, with special attention to the notion of

---

1 Under the dictatorship of the Nationalists from 1949 on people were not allowed to talk about the issue of ethnicity in public. Not until the late 1980s, as the dictatorship softened, did the issue of ethnicity surge up.

bad faith,<sup>2</sup> to discuss the novel. But let me first introduce Sartre's conception and related concepts as background of discussion, and then go back to the novel of *Orphan of Asia*.

### Sartre on Bad Faith

The project of *Being and Nothingness* – Sartre's early major work – lies in an analysis of the question of how nothingness comes about in the midst of the massive being? The answer offered by Sartre is clear and simple: It is because of human consciousness.

Consciousness, which is characterized by Sartre as »being-for-itself«, contrasts with the massive being of »being-in-itself«. On account of the existentiality of human being, consciousness creates nothingness in the world. The »being-for-itself« illuminates the »being-in-itself« by negating it, as Sartre puts it:

...the given is appreciated in terms of something which does not yet exist; it is in the light of non-being that being-in-itself is illuminated. (Sartre 1957: 478)

170

As a human being I intend to be what I desire to be and in light of this future status I look back on my contemporary status. In this way I determine the meaning of my surroundings and myself. As being-for-itself, I am totally different from all the things contrasting with myself, the so-called being-in-itself. I am what I am to be, not just what I am. The consciousness of mine finds out what is absent in me and also in my surroundings, I encounter the »nothingness«, according as Sartre depicts it. I am always negating my present status in light of the future status. I cannot but continue making choices for myself, determining my own future. All in all, the truth of the human reality is, as Sartre conceives of it, »to be is to choose oneself«. (Sartre 1957: 440) Freedom constitutes the essence of human being, and Sartre holds freedom to be »absolute« because it is what human being cannot be deprived of. Absolute freedom yields absolute responsibility. This simple truth is what human being has to recognize unless he flees from it. The escape would result in what Sartre calls bad faith.

Basically bad faith is lying to oneself. Similar to irony, it negates what one confirms and confirms what one denies. How does it come about that human beings

2 Sartre studies the ethnic problem notably in his analysis of Jewish problem in *Anti-Semitism and Jew*. Whereas Sartre scarcely makes use of bad faith to tackle this problem (see Sartre 1995: 99), he focuses more on the distinction of authenticity and inauthenticity. My paper will not follow the framework that Sartre offers in that book, nevertheless I will focus on Sartre's notion of »situation«, which is crucial to his understanding of bad faith as well as authenticity.

are in such a state of ironic self-deception? Sartre thus inquires about the conditions for the possibility of bad faith by asking:

What must be the being of man if he is to be capable of bad faith? (Sartre 1957: 55)

The answer lies in the duplicity of human beings: facticity and transcendence. This duplicate notions has to be understood against Sartrean ideas of freedom and situation. The freedom, as Sartre conceives of it, does not denote the absence of coercion that is mostly prevalent in the political domain, nor does it mean the necessary postulate of morality, such as Kant advocates in his moral philosophy. It is rather the ontological status of human being (Sartre 1957: 476), the being that has to make choices for himself all the time. The reason why Sartre holds human being to be free lies in the basic characteristics of human consciousness, which never stays unchanged, that is to say, the consciousness always transcends itself. It makes projects for the future and pursues fulfilling them. Once a project is realized, another new projects will follow up.

Now, one question has to be raised: does that kind of freedom, as Sartre conceives of it, have no restraints at all? Are people indeed allowed to do whatever they want? What about the physical limitations to my actions? What about the social and cultural impacts? What about my limited span of life and my death? It is in considerations of such problematics that Sartre comes up with the so-called »paradox of freedom«, in which he introduces the notion of situation.

171

Situation implies that the freedom, in spite of being absolute, can only be realized in »real situations«, that is to say, with regards to restrictions. These restrictions can be regarded as the result of the inevitable »facticity« of human being, such as my birth in a certain time and a certain place, my death at a certain moment in the future, I have to live in a certain place, have to deal with my surroundings and other people etc. According to Sartre, the meaning of everything is up to me because I am absolutely free. In spite of that, freedom can be realized only against facticity. How can these two seemingly contradictory components – freedom and facticity – be reconcilable? Sartre says emphatically that although I cannot help encountering facticity, yet the meaning of this facticity has to be disclosed by myself. As Sartre puts it:

It is impossible to grasp facticity in its brute nudity, since all that we will find of it is already recovered and freely constructed. (Sartre 1957: 83)

Facticity becomes situation only in light of the transcendence of my freedom. Only when I make a project for the future will I see clearly the meaning of the

---

surroundings and whether they are helping me or preventing me from my goal. There is no purely neutral surrounding for me, the surrounding always has some meaning, and the meaning will not become obvious except as a result of my freedom. Understood in this way, freedom stands in an inseparable relation to facticity. As Sartre puts it in brief, »freedom is the apprehension of my facticity«. (Sartre 1957: 494) Understood as such, situation is neither objective nor subjective, it is rather the relation between both sides.

As a restriction of my freedom, facticity remains undifferentiated and meaningless, only when it is illuminated through freedom will it become »my situation«. Sartre distinguishes the different aspects of facticity: my place, my past, my environment, my fellowman and my death. (Cf. Sartre 1957: 489ff.) What is common among all these aspects? Sartre asks: do all of them possess characteristics of their own, which »appear« naturally and objectively? Can I describe »my place« in terms of objective measurement, »my past« in terms of objectively temporal dimension? Similarly, do the objects surrounding me first exist there and then come into relations with me? Do the people appear to me also in the same way? And is my death no more than an objective fact, namely: someday I will die. This is a fact that cannot be denied, just like the death of anybody. Sartre cannot accept the naïve way of looking at such aspects of facticity. Although we must assume that these aspects do exist out there, we never know exactly their meanings. To be precise, these aspects of facticity are not »objective facts« at all, because facticity is facticity only when it is related to me, i.e., »my place«, »my past«, etc. And the facticity waits to be illuminated by my freedom. Freedom and facticity are inextricably connected, and together they make up »situation«.

172

According to the above analysis, Sartre is opposed to the thought that we are sometimes forced by the uncontrollable factors to do what we are unwilling to do. In general, people might complain about their unfortunate situations, which prevent them from pursuing their goals. »Circumstances have been against me, I was worthy to be something much better than I have been.« (Sartre 1977: 41) Sartre holds that it is their indeterminations rather than their situations that are to blame. They give in to the »objective situation«, which takes over the decision as to what they should do. As a matter of fact, they escape from freedom and turn back on their own responsibility.

So far as the notions of facticity and transcendence are clarified, we are able to return to the questions raised at the beginning: How does it come about that human beings are in such a state of ironic self-deception? Sartre asks about the conditions for the possibility of bad faith and, just as already hinted above, he answers the question by bringing up the duplicate aspects of human reality: fac-

ticity and transcendence. Our clarifications show that facticity and transcendence rely on each other, the transcendence of freedom cannot be but the apprehension of facticity and the meaning of facticity would remain obscure without the illumination of freedom. But the desired synthesis might remain unsuccessful and the bad faith just comes about as a result. According to Sartre:

These two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of a valid coordination. But bad faith does not wish either to coordinate them or to surmount them in a synthesis. Bad faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as *being* facticity, in such a way that at the instant when a person apprehends the one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other. (Sartre 1957: 56)

Sartre takes the example of a lady who consents to go for a date with a particular man. As usual, during the date the male will »take the first step« to approach the female. She is quite aware of the situation, but pretends that she knows nothing about it. She denies to admit the necessity for her to make a decision: to let go or not. Suppose her companion takes her hand, the situation is changed and calls for an immediate decision from her. What does she do? According to Sartre's description:

To leave the hand there is to consent in herself to flirt, to engage herself. To withdraw it is to break the troubled and unstable harmony which gives the hour its charm. The aim is to postpone the moment of decision as long as possible. We know what happens next; the young woman leaves her hand there, but she *does not notice* that she is leaving it. She does not notice because it happens by chance that she is at this moment all intellect. She draws her companion up to the most lofty regions of sentimental speculation; she speaks of Life, of her life, she shows herself in her essential aspect—a personality, a consciousness. And during this time the divorce of the body from the soul is accomplished; the hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion—neither consenting nor resisting—a thing. (Sartre 1957: 55–56)

173

Sartre concludes:

We shall say that this woman is in bad faith. (Sartre 1957: 56)

Why is this lady with such behavior of »not doing« designated by Sartre as being in bad faith? The key point lies in »consciousness«, she wants to prove to herself that she is not just what she is from the perspective of others, she is not her body, she is far beyond her body and becomes nothing but consciousness. However, ironically, consciousness, which is also characterized as transcendence, can never stay unchanged all the time, that is, it cannot become something permanent and

---

stable. But this lady wants to stay unchanged and proves herself that she »is« not what others think her to be and »is« what she thinks herself to be. She ironically confirms her transcendence by way of reversing it as facticity. By confirming myself to be transcendence, »I flee from myself, I escape myself.« (Sartre 1957: 57) And Sartre adds, »the ambiguity necessary for bad faith comes from the fact that I affirm here that I *am* my transcendence in the mode of being of a thing.« (Sartre 1957: 57) The lady in the example thinks she »arrests this transcendence«. Nevertheless »she glues it down with all the facticity of the present«. (Sartre 1957: 57)

After the discussion of the reverse relationship of transcendence and facticity, Sartre goes on discussing the problem of »sincerity«, which is closely related to the basic structure of »being-for-itself« and »being-for-others« and counts as another form of bad faith.

The fact that the human being is »being-for-itself« as well as »being-for-others« denotes that the behavior of one's own is not only significant for oneself, but also for others. Parallel to the desired synthesis of transcendence and facticity, there should be the ideal corporation of »being-for-itself« as well as »being-for-others«. However, it is usually the case that people hardly realize this ideal. They tend to pay more attention to the evaluation of others instead of trusting their own. As a result, they orientate their behavior to the expectations or evaluations of other people. They let go the demands of others on them. So long as one's behavior is performed through the body, we can say that the body under such circumstances is not the body of one's own. In such a situation people lose control of themselves completely. They even consider themselves helpless, seemingly having no other choice. Sartre regards such an attitude and performance as unworthy of a human being as a conscious being and designates it as bad faith.

174

The café waiter, depicted as follows, is a typical example:

His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally, there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually reestablishes by a light movement of the arm and hand.« (Sartre 1957: 59)

Sartre comments, the waiter seems to play a game, he seems to amuse himself. But what is he playing? Obviously he is playing the game of being a waiter. Nev-

ertheless he lacks the kind of spontaneity that the children display while playing. The waiter plays in order to fulfill his role as a waiter. In this sense he is compelled to do so. But why is he compelled? No other reason than to fulfill the expectations of other people, who treat him as a waiter. He »is« a waiter, waiter is what he is.

Somehow people in daily life praise highly the devotion to what one truly is. He has the obligation to fulfill all the duties that his occupation or social status demands on him. Let us return to Sartre's description of the waiter once again:

What I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café waiter, as if it were not just in my power to confer their value and their urgency upon my duties and the rights of my position, as if it were not my free choice to get up each morning at five o'clock or to remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired. As if from the very fact that I sustain this role in existence I did not transcend it on every side, as if I did not constitute myself as one *beyond* my condition. (Sartre 1957: 59)

Even though there is no doubt that I *am* a café waiter instead of a diplomat or a reporter – whatever I can be. Yet Sartre never agrees that there is a true essence of oneself that one can identify himself to. He just doubts the possibility of applying the principle of identity to human reality. According to his explications: »... the principle of identity must not represent a constitutive principle of human reality and human reality must not be necessarily what it is but must be able to be what it is not.« (Sartre 1957: 58) The human being is never being-in-itself, he can be what he is not and therefore can be not what he is presently. Whatever he is, he is never just what he is, but he is what he is only because of becoming. And what he actually is by no means the only possibility of what he can become. In short, one should not be too serious or too sincere about what he is in real life.

All in all, I am not a waiter »in the mode of being in-itself«, and I am a waiter only »in the mode of *being what I am not*«. That is to say, whatever I am, I choose to be what I am. No matter how I am sincere about my mode of being, I am never obliged to be only what I am presently unless I consent to this mode of being. The same holds for the value of any mode of being. If I feel obliged to follow any value system, if any value calls on me to follow its instruction, it is on account of my choice that the appeal can be brought into effect. »To be sincere, we said, is to be what one is. That supposes that I am not originally what I am.« (Sartre 1957: 62) And this is in contradiction with the structure of my consciousness. To sum up, »What then is sincerity except precisely a phenomenon of bad faith?« (Sartre 1957: 63)

---

So far I have explored the meaning of bad faith in Sartre. Next, I will discuss the interethnic relationship through a literary work composed in colonial Taiwan (1895–1945) within the framework of this notion.

### ***Orphan of Asia* interpreted in terms of Sartre**

*Orphan of Asia*, written by Wu Zhuoliu, is one of the most well-known novels written during the colonial period of Taiwan (1895–1945). This work was finished in the year 1945, short before the end of Second World War. First published in Japanese in 1956, it was later translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan in 1962. The English translation was also published in 2005.

In this novel, Wu Zhuoliu depicts the colonial situation by describing a person named Hu Taiming, whose life story full of unsolvable contradictions is. Born in Taiwan, Hu Taiming is educated to be a teacher in elementary school. He teaches for some years before he goes to Japan for advanced study. Returning to Taiwan after his studies and witnessing the colonial misery as before, he decides to go to mainland China in hope for a life of dignity there. But due to the breakout of Sino-Japanese war he is forced to return to Taiwan, only to witness the colonial miseries as before. This is a novel full of »spatial movements«, which »presents an allegory of both the inevitability and the impossibility of discovering a fixed and autonomous identity under the regime of colonial and nationalist representations.« (Ching 2001: 177) The protagonist ends up insane at home.

As a descent of land owner, Hu Taiming learns lots of the Chinese classics in a private school, through which he was well acquainted with the traditional Chinese worldview. Later he visits the modern school established by Japanese colonizers. Such an educational background constitutes a cultural tension that Taiming can never get rid of: there are endless conflicts in his mind between the worldviews introduced by Japanese education and the traditional Chinese canons.

After Hu graduated from a normal high school, he teaches in an elementary »common school« near his hometown. There he witnesses the unequal treatment between the colonizer and the colonized. No sooner does he begin his career than he hears the Taiwanese colleagues complain to him about the inequality between the Japanese and Taiwanese teachers. There are many facts which run counter to the slogan of »Japan and Taiwan as one«. The inequality is obvious with respect to salary as well as status. In the beginning, Taiming considers these complaints childish and petty. But after he falls in love with the Japanese colleague called Hisako, and begins to contemplate the (im)possibility with Hisako, he is struck by the gap between the colonizing and the colonized.



...the more she aroused him, the more depressed he felt and the deeper he slid down into the unbridgeable abyss that separated them, he Taiwanese and she Japanese. (Wu 2005: 29)

There is the obvious fact of different nationalities, but first of all this difference is imbedded in the colonial situation, and the arrogance of the colonizer is everywhere to be seen. For example, Hisako has enormous bias with regard to the customs of the Taiwanese people. She thought that people in Taiwan never bathe, therefore she is convinced that Taiming never bathes either. Although Taiming seldom eats garlic, she used to say that Taiming always smells of garlic. Once she and Taiming are invited by a town mayor to join a meal and offered with chicken soup, she remarks secretly to Taiming that the meal is barbarous. Nevertheless, with the first taste, she is excited about it and consumes it quickly. Her remark represents a kind of ignorant arrogance and her behavior shows that she is as ordinary as anyone else.

In order to escape from this kind of unbearable colonial condition, Taiming decides to study in Japan. There he enjoys his stay very much, because he is no longer confronted with the kind of discrimination he suffers in Taiwan. Everywhere he goes, the Japanese people in Japan are friendly to him. However, he is bothered by another kind of embarrassment—the inferior complex of the Taiwanese people as well as the attitude of discrimination in the Chinese people. No sooner he arrives at Tokyo does his old classmate suggest him to introduce himself as someone from Fukuoka, a place in Southern Japan, because the accents of both Taiwan and Fukuoka sound alike. Taiming finds this suggestion quite unacceptable, because it reflects the inferior view of oneself. The colleague who suggests him to disguise himself before the Japanese even suggests him to do the same in the face of Chinese people. He »should« hide from himself as a Taiwanese wherever he goes.

Once Taiming unwittingly utters some Taiwanese terms during a student meeting and a student from Canton, a province in Southern China, comes to ask him whether he is from Canton, too? Taiming hesitates and does not answer the question; at another time when Taiming mentions that he comes from Taiwan, a student from Fanyu, a place in Canton, gets furious and turns away from him right away. Taiming is quite frustrated by all these unpleasant experiences of discrimination.

Back to Taiwan after studying in Japan, Hu has to face the colonial miseries just like before. For example, the sugar company decides to construct a railway system in order to transport sugar cane. That decision results in the destruction of

---

the tomb of the Hu family's ancestors. The whole family is furious about this, yet they have no chance to claim their own right even when they appeal to the court. This case shows how weakly the Taiwanese people are protected by the law.

Since Taiming does not succeed in a career back home on the island, he decides to go to China to try his chance. He has a good time in the first few years, he gets married, has a child, works as a teacher teaching Japanese in Nanking etc. Unfortunately, by the approaching of the Sino-Japanese war, the situation of the Taiwanese people on mainland becomes worse and worse. Such a situation corresponds to the warning of his friend Zeng, who says to Taiming soon after his arrival in Shanghai:

»People will look askance at us wherever we go, it's our fate. It's not about what we've done or haven't done. We're deformed – fate's monstrous children. Of course it's unfair, but we can't do much about it...« (Wu 2005: 98)

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war causes the Chinese government to be suspicious and hostile to the Taiwanese people, many of them are arrested without any reasons. Taiming, with no exception, is also under arrest. Fortunately, he was rescued by two of his former students, who drive him to the river harbor of Nanking. A Japanese ship allows him to come aboard only because Taiming explains to him that he has Japanese citizenship. It is extremely ironical, because Taiming never considers himself Japanese, but in order to escape persecution by the Chinese government, he can only insist on his Japanese affinity.

178

After he flees to Shanghai, he notices how bitterly Taiwanese people are situated between China and Japan, without being trusted by either side. His friend remarked unwittingly:

You see the forces of history carrying away everything, and you can't join any of them. Let's say you manage to convince yourself one way or the other, you won't convince anyone else; everyone'll think you're a spy. Come and think of it, you are a sort of misfit, aren't you? (Wu 2005: 152)

Taiming's experiences in China reveal that Taiwanese people are not only the orphans of Asia but also crooked creatures on the earth. Due to the Japanese colonization, Taiwanese people are no longer considered pure Chinese, they became untrustworthy for the Chinese.

Taiming is warmly accepted by his family when he returns to Taiwan. But the general situation on the island is not at all better than when he left for China.

---

The so-called Kominka (皇民化運動), the movement of imperialization, was just at its height. Some people are eager to change their family name into Japanese in order to become Japanese. They are convinced that by becoming Japanese some profits may be gained, for example, their children may have opportunity to visit better schools. Without showing royalty to the Japanese they would become disadvantaged.

In addition, many Taiwanese bureaucrats treat Taiwanese people arrogantly as if they themselves were Japanese. In their eyes all Taiwanese people have to be cooperative especially when the (Japanese) nation is in need of them. Only those who are cooperative deserve to be called »citizens«. Taiming despises such bureaucrats who bow to the Japanese and treat their landmen with arrogance. Taiming regards it as a big tragedy, but under the colonial condition, he cannot but put up with all these mishaps. As Japan is more and more involved in war, Taiming is also called on to serve the army. He is sent to Canton, where he has to put on the uniform of Japanese soldier. Mentally he can never accept that role he plays in the face of the Chinese People. His sympathy for the Chinese people is obvious each time he witnesses the sufferings of the Chinese people.

When there are court-martials, Taiming is called on to do the translations. On one occasion eight young men suspected of resistance are arrested and are sent to the court. No matter whether there is evidence for their resistance activity, they are punished with execution. For each case, being the translator, Taiming cannot but get involved, and the more he witnesses the executions, the more he finds them unbearable. Particularly when he sees how courageously these young people behave themselves prior to execution, he is completely distressed. He becomes seriously ill and is sent back to Taiwan after being diagnosed as useless to the army.

Once again Taiming returns to Taiwan, although he recovers physically day by day, yet he never really recovers from his psychological depression. The author of the book *Becoming Japanese* describes the situation of Taiming as such: »... the movements between Taiwan, Japan, and China are imbued with a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, and the loss of sense of grounding.« (Ching 2001: 196) With the highest sensitivity, he could no longer get over the overwhelming pressure from all sides. Particularly, when he witnesses the death of his younger brother due to harsh force-labor, he breaks down and goes insane.

The story above displays how Taiming unfortunately moves around between Taiwan, Japan, and China, and suffers from depressions of all kinds. As we see, at home in Taiwan, he witnesses the unequal treatment of Japanese and Taiwanese

---

colleagues; in Japan, he is discriminated against by Chinese students who study in Japan; his first stay in China ends up with the tragedy of being imprisoned and ironically only thanks to his admission of Japanese citizenship could he escape from danger. The second stay in China during the war makes him witness the unbearable sufferings of the Chinese people. His final stay at home compels him to confront the exploitation by the colonizers and the absolutely absurd movement of imperialization.

According to the novel, Taiming hopes to lead a humble, normal life. But it just seems hardly realizable, insofar as the historical environment demands that he has to disguise himself from time to time and he has to be ready to make compromises in this way. Various things upset him and make him regret a great deal. His personality with highest degree of sensitivity prevents him from living against his nature, to live in the mode of bad faith like many others. But this sensitivity brings about storms of guilty feelings in him, which leads to his final tragedy of mental breakdown. We may ask the question, is Taiming's insistence worth it?

Taiming's brother, who enthusiastically supports the movement of imperialization, has the strong desire to »become Japanese«. He wishes to live his daily life according to the norms set up by the Japanese. This kind of attitude, interpreted through Sartre, denies the facticity of being Taiwanese, assumes on the one hand an all too transcendent mode of being, that is, to be Japanese, the colonizer. On the other hand, those who consider themselves only from the standpoints of others, i.e., the perspective of the Japanese, they are too serious about what the Japanese think about them, without being able to reflect on what they think about themselves. In sum, a person like the brother of Taiming behaves typically in the twofold modes of bad faith described above.

Taiming wishes to be true to himself rather than being self-deceptive. But this insistence drives him into a dead-end situation. His historical environment compels him to be typified as orphan-like »Taiwanese«, exploited by the Japanese, and discriminated and distrusted by the Chinese. Such a situation makes him confront all kinds of biases that leave him no room for what he desires himself to be.

Put differently, Taiming is the one who is unwilling to be in bad faith. He keeps his self-awareness, avoids self-deception, and despises the self-deception of other people as well. He is independent with regard to dealing with his own ethnic situation. He holds his own attitude all the time, even when he goes to China the second time and has to assume the role of Japanese soldier in the face of the

---

Chinese people. He just could not assimilate himself to the role he plays, and shows great sympathy for the Chinese people. He suffers a lot psychologically, his mental breakdown lets him evade death on the battlefield, but it just could not free him from going mad at home eventually. All this discloses his vehement struggles. On the one hand, he cannot accept to be Japanese, but on the other hand, he is not accepted by the Chinese to be genuine Chinese. He feels excluded by both sides. That constitutes his ethnic situation exactly. As we already know, born into the colonial environment, he has no chance to get rid of the Japanese impact. But this impact does not necessarily lead to the consequence of being Japanese or »becoming Japanese«. The private education to learn the Chinese classics makes him retain the heritage of Chinese culture, which makes up a counter-impact to the Japanese education. For this reason among others he just could not treat himself automatically as Japanese. Somehow his experiences in China make him aware of the cruel reality that he is no longer a »genuine Chinese«. He is eliminated by China – his national origin. What can he do in this situation? To be true to himself is just to face what is factually real to him; he is not a Japanese, nor is he any longer Chinese, is this in-between the birth of a new ethnic identity? The author of *Orphan of Asia* did not give us any hint of this possibility, but the insanity of the protagonist in this novel, Hu Taiming, indicate the hardship in the search for the new identity.

Is Taiming to be positively evaluated according to Sartre's point of view? Taiming obviously rejects both options, either pretending to be a pure Chinese regardless of his Taiwanese background, or seeking to become Japanese regardless of his colonized status. He is tangled in his situation and completely aware of what he has to face. Willingly or not, he can be said to be in anguish all the time. He not only refrains from jumping to any quick decision, but also rejects any cheap solution to avoid his seemingly unavoidable dilemma.<sup>3</sup> He namely refuses to live in bad faith.

181

---

3 As regards the distinction of authenticity and inauthenticity, Sartre explains: »If it is agreed that man may be defined as a being having freedom within the limits of a situation, then it is easy to see that the exercise of this freedom may be considered as *authentic* or *inauthentic* according to the choices made in the situation. Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate.« (Sartre 1995: 90) By the way, Sartre says: »And the Jew does not escape this rule: authenticity for him is to live to the full his condition as Jew; inauthenticity is to deny it or to attempt to escape from it. Inauthenticity is no doubt more tempting for him than for other men, because the situation which he has to lay claim to and to live in is quite simply that of a martyr.« (Sartre 1995: 91)

---

Taiming's condition is comparable to Jewish authenticity as Sartre depicts it in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. In his analysis Sartre describes the »Jewish authenticity« as follows:

Jewish authenticity consists in choosing oneself as Jew – that is, in realizing one's Jewish condition. The authentic Jew abandons the myth of the universal man; he knows himself and wills himself into history as a historic and damned creature; he ceases to run away from himself and to be shamed of his own kind. He understands that society is bad; for the naïve monism of the inauthentic Jew he substitutes a social pluralism. He knows that he is one who stands apart, untouchable, scorned, proscribed – and it is as such that he asserts his being. (Sartre 1995: 136)

Even though there is much difference between the problem of Taiwanese and Jew, the misery of being excluded they both suffer is very much alike. Viewed as such, the distinction of authenticity and inauthenticity that Sartre applies to the Jew is applicable to the Taiwanese under Japanese colonization as well. In this case I would evaluate the performance of Taiming as authentic, insofar as he takes up his historical situation without fleeing by cheap solution. Let us hear once again what Sartre says about the authentic Jew: »...he accepts the obligation to live in a situation that is defined precisely by the fact that it is unlivable« (Sartre 1995: 136).

182

## Conclusion

Although Hu Taiming is merely a fictional figure, and the background of his life-story does not exist any longer, however, what Hu had to face during his lifetime does not seem to have vanished completely today. In view of the contemporary situation in Taiwan, as long as a Taiwanese begins to consider soberly his identity problem, one can hardly say that the torments of Taiming are gone forever. The debates on the future orientation of Taiwan continue to grow, be it culturally, socially or politically. Should the people on the island just give up the identity problem and let go whatever may come, or else should they insist on a kind of cultural or political identity – be it traditional Chinese or indigenous Taiwanese? Over 60 years after the miserable colonization period ended, the struggle about this problematics still continues, and if it is time to take up a philosophical reflection on this issue, then analysis based upon Sartrean notion of bad faith and related concepts can prove to be highly promising.

## References

Catalano, Joseph (1990a): »Authenticity: A Sartrean Perspective«, in: *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. XX II, No.2, Winter, p. 99–119.

- (1990b): »Successfully Lying to Oneself: A Sartrean Perspective«, in: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.1, No.4, 1990, p. 673–693.
- Ching, Leo T. S. (2001): *Becoming »Japanese«: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation*, Berkeley/Los Angeles /London: University of California Press.
- Elster, Jon (1987): »Deception and Self-deception in Stendhal: some Sartrian Themes«, in: *The Multiple Self*, ed.by Jon Elster, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 93–113.
- Fanon, Frantz (1967): *Black Skin, White Masks*, tr. by Charles Lam Markmann, New York: Grove Press.
- Fox, Nik Farrell (2003): *The New Sartre: Explorations in Postmodernism*, New York/ London: Continuum.
- Gordon, Lewis R. (1995): *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*. New York: Humanity Books.
- Hartman, Klaus (1966): *Sartre's Ontology: A study of Being and Nothingness in the Light of Hegel's Logic*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Kruks, Sonia (1996): »Fanon, Sartre and Identity Politics«, in: *Fanon. A Critical Reader*, Malden: Blackwell Publishers.
- Natanson, Maurice (1951): *A Critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's Ontology*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
- Perna, Maria Antonietta (2003): »Bad Faith and Self-Deception: Reconstructing the Sartrean Perspective«, in: *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*, Vol. 34, No1, 2003, p. 22–44.
- Santoni, Ronald E. (1990): »The Cynicism of Sartre's 'Bad Faith'«, in: *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, No.1, Issue No. 117, p. 3–15.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1957): *Being and Nothingness*, tr. by Hazel Barnes, London: Methuen & Co. LTD.
- (1972): *Imagination: A psychological Critique*, tr. by Forrest Williams, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- (1977): *Existentialism and Humanism*, tr. by Philip Mairet, New York: Haskell House Publishers.
- (1995): *Anti-Semite and Jew: An exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, tr. by George J. Becker, preface by Michael Walzer, New York: Schocken Books.
- (1999): *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, tr. by Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick, New York: Hill and Wang.
- (2004): *The Imaginary: A phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, tr. by Jonathan Webber, London/New York: Routledge.
- Schilpp, Paul Arthur (ed.) (1981): *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, La Salle (Ill.): Open Court.
- Stone, Robert V. (1981): »Sartre on Bad Faith and Authenticity«, in: *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed.), La Salle (Ill.): Open Court, p. 246–255.
- Wu, Zhuoliu (2005): *Orphan of Asia*, tr. by Ioannis Metzias, New York: Columbia University Press.