

INNER TIME AND A PHENOMENOLOGY OF EXISTENCE

Elements of a Reductive Consciousness

To Edmund Husserl, the secret of meaning seemed hidden in the structure of consciousness. To unlock the structure of consciousness and reveal the nature of meaning, he forged his unique notion of intentionality, a theory which underpins his entire attempt to create a Transcendental Phenomenology. Husserl developed his theory for application strictly within the absolute realm of a reduced consciousness.¹ Before dealing with the relevance of inner time to a phenomenology of existence, Husserl's theory of consciousness and the essentialized temporality necessary to its deployment, must be briefly outlined.

As guarantee both of the intrinsic significance of each act of consciousness and its nature as a directedness towards its objects, Husserl isolates two aspects of consciousness, separate from each other but always strictly correlated within the flow of consciousness. On the significant organization of these two correlates rests all meaning, both actual and potential. The mode of appearance of the object of knowledge is distinguished from that aspect of the object of knowledge which appears within consciousness. The act of consciousness is termed the 'noesis', the object as it is revealed through the act, the 'noema'. The noema as the perspectival appearance of the object constitutes the objective content of the reduced realm :

"Like perception, every intentional experience—and this is indeed the fundamental mark of intentionality—has its "intentional object" as its objective meaning."²

Noetic acts are unique formations of consciousness and may not be re-enacted. The noema of consciousness can however recur and may be recaptured through a variety of noetic acts. Take for instance, a flower growing in the midst of a meadow. It may be apprehended not only through a variety of spatial perspectives—from the side, above, below, from very close, from a great distance, and so on—but also from a variety of temporal perspectives. It can be seen in time present, remembered or projected; it can be dreamt of or imagined. In each and every

act of consciousness that aspect of the flower which is perspectively brought into the realm of consciousness forms the noema; the various acts of consciousness through which it is made available form the noeses. Meaningfulness is dependent on the systematic organization of the noemata. As each noema is a perspectival grasp of the flower in the meadow, so knowledge of the same flower rests on the systematically organized totality of its noemata, a multiplicity of noemata being attributable to the one object in reality.

To create significance, these noemata must be ordered into an integrated whole. In *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl offers an example of the organized unity of noemata achieved through a variety of noetic acts :

"I see in pure reflection that "this" die is given continuously as an objective unity in a multiform and changeable multiplicity of manners of appearing, which belong determinately to it. "³

Indeed the entire span of conscious life, he continues, is composed of nothing less than a "describable *structure of multiplicities* "⁴, formed of that strict correlation between noesis and noema through which alone significance is brought into being for the conscious man.

Husserl is at pains to insist that the correlation of noesis and noema far from being a mere "continuous connectedness "⁵ is brought about through the highest possible organization. Their intentional co-existence is achieved through a "unity of synthesis "⁶. As he emphatically reiterates : "*the whole of conscious life is unified synthetically* "⁷. But the identity and objectivity required of a significant consciousness do not and cannot exist apart from a certain modal prerequisite of the noetico-noematic structure. And it is to this modality, essential to the formal unity of intentional configurations that Husserl now turns :

"The fundamental form of this universal synthesis, the form that makes all other synthesis of consciousness possible, is the all-embracing consciousness of internal time. "⁸

Only through an original grasp of an internal or inner time can the various noetic apprehensions of the meaning or meanings of an object be distinguished and their contents organized into the synthetic unity necessary to identity. Noetic acts as unique formations of consciousness exist only for a moment in inner time;

as such they can never be recovered in their exact shape for each fresh noetic act would involve an original reformation of consciousness. Knowledge of identity, whether of a conscious act, a real object or even the subjectivity, would lie irreperably beyond the grasp of consciousness could the various noetic acts not be temporally differentiated and their separate significance organized into a unity. Objectivity is equally dependent on inner time : it can be brought about only through an inner time capable of organizing and reorganizing the noemata of past acts in time present and so constructing a durable meaning for the subjectivity.⁹ Aron Gurwitsch in a masterly article explains the relation between identity and objectivity :

“Objectivity is identifiableness, i.e., the possibility of reverting again and again to what, through the present experienced act, is offered to consciousness, and the possibility of doing so whether in the same or in any other mode of awareness.”¹⁰

From this succinct description of the nature of the objectivity available within consciousness, he turns to the inner time which underpins both it and the identity on which it depends :

“Objectivity and identity have then no sense, unless with regard to a multiplicity of acts, that is to say *with reference to the temporality of conscious life*.”¹¹

(b) These reflections of Husserl on the relevance of inner time to the significant organization of consciousness are unfolded within the reduced arena of Transcendental Phenomenology. Through use of the *epoché* an absolute consciousness and its phenomenological data are refined out of the spatio-temporal realities of human existence. The first step in enactment of the *epoché* involves suspension of all beliefs relating to the external world. The world which is given in perception, the world of objects and others, is ‘bracketed’ : “every thesis related to this objectivity must be disconnected...”¹² The bracketing of the world of existence is the prelude to the next steps : the eidetic reduction of the particular perceptual act and the transcendental reduction of the personal subjectivity. In his preface to the English edition of *Ideas* Husserl elaborates on the theme of the reduction of existential consciousness :

“If we now perform this transcendental-phenomenological reduction, this transformation of the natural and psychologically

inward standpoint whereby it is transcendentalized, the psychological subjectivity loses just that which makes it something real in the world that lies before us; it loses the meaning of the soul as belonging to a body that exists in an objective spatio-temporal Nature. This transformation of meaning concerns myself, above all the 'I'....¹³

The suspension of the world of existence has, correlatively involved the reduction of existential subjectivity to pure, impersonal consciousness.

In *Ideas*, Husserl maintains that enactment of the *epoché* reveals a Transcendental Ego which stands outside the structures of reduced consciousness as the guarantee of unity in the objects of thought. As such it is the one necessary *a priori* to all significant configurations of the reduced realm. Within the purity of the eidetic sphere, the Transcendental Ego is the ultimate guarantee of the signifying powers of that inner time through which alone the synthesis of meaning is achieved. The identity, objectivity and coherence of inner time rest on the *a priori* existence of this ego revealed to consciousness in reflection on itself. That the realm of reduced consciousness over which this ego presides has no connections with the relativity of common existence, is a point of fundamental importance to Transcendental Phenomenology. As Husserl so vividly puts it: "between the meanings of consciousness and reality yawns a veritable abyss".¹⁴ He continues:

"Consciousness, considered in its *purity*, must be reckoned as a self-contained system of Being, as a system of Absolute Being, into which nothing can penetrate, and from which nothing can escape; which has no spatio-temporal exterior and can be inside no spatio-temporal system; which cannot experience causality from anything nor exert causality upon anything, it being presupposed that causality bears the normal sense of natural causality as a relation of dependance between realities.

On the other side, the whole spatio-temporal world to which man and the human Ego claim to belong as subordinate singular realities, is according to its own meaning mere intentional Being, a Being, therefore, which has the merely secondary, relative sense of a Being for consciousness.¹⁵

The Husserlian *cogito* is as radically cut off from the real world as the Cartesian *cogito* on which it is based. Descartes had been able to posit interaction between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* through miraculous means; "animal spirits", he tells us, like a pure vivid flame or a fine and subtle wind mediate between mind and the bodily machine.¹⁶ Ideas mediate between consciousness and reality; though occurrences in consciousness they correspond to objects in the external world. Their authenticity is guaranteed by the existence of God. The Husserlian *cogito* has however, no such divine guarantees to relate it to the external world. Unlike the Cartesian *cogito* it has subsumed all objective reality as its sense and objectivity may be granted a place within the reduced system only insofar as it is immanently implied by the eidetic structures. And so Husserl can speak of the 'reconstruction of the world' from transcendental data, a step which Descartes, in spite of his desire to create a universal mathematics would have found inconceivable. A "veritable abyss" does indeed loom between the reductive consciousness and reality. The deployment of the *epoché* and the revelation of the Transcendental Ego have subsumed all need for mediating principles. This sharp severance of the inner time of the reductive consciousness from the extension of reality constitutes the defining characteristic of this stage of Husserlian phenomenology.¹⁷

Sartre's Negation of Inner Time

It will be evident from this brief exposition of some points concerning Husserl's theory of intentionality, that the significance of the noetico-noematic structures depends on the unity of inner time and further that this inner time, guaranteed in its identity by the Transcendental Ego, is a modality radically cleft from the shared reality of existence. Since Husserl forged his theory with unique reference to the reduced realm of consciousness, its use in the existing format is restricted to the phenomenological data revealed by the *epoché*. But can his discovery of a consciousness which exists as a directedness towards the objects of thought and creates significance by organizing them through the synthetic powers of inner time, in short an intentional consciousness, be transformed into an instrument for exploring the configurations of human historicity? Can the notion of intentionality be forged

into a theory capable of dealing with a consciousness immersed in the world, meditating upon it and acting within it ?

In marked contrast to the Husserl of *Ideas*, Sartre felt that phenomenology should deal with precisely such an existential consciousness and in terms of just that which makes it real in the world that lies before us. The consciousness which concerned Sartre exists as an intrinsic part of the spatio-temporal world, interpreting it, experiencing and exerting causality within it. But how was the Husserlian theory to be existentialized and so fashioned into a method adequate to the analysis of an existential subjectivity ? This was the problem facing Sartre who as a youthful philosopher had been deeply excited by his discovery of Husserlian phenomenology. He spent the year 1933-34 in Berlin, actively studying phenomenological principles and his earliest theoretical work, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936), outlines the fresh vision of intentionality which was to underpin his entire phenomenology of existence. But in what measure is Sartre's attempt successful ? Does he in fact forge an existentialized notion of intentionality capable of analysing the configurations of an existential consciousness ? In the following section I shall attempt to provide an answer.

In his efforts to existentialize the phenomenological vision of consciousness, Sartre concentrates his attack on that one *a priori* to the unity and identity of the reductive realm, the Transcendental Ego, he characterizes it as "the death of consciousness"¹⁸ By negating the validity of the Transcendental Ego, consciousness could be freed from the grip of the *epoché*. Further an irreducible substantial ego discovered by consciousness in reflection on itself seemed to Sartre a typical symptom of Idealist self-deception. The new phenomenology was to liberate consciousness from this last remnant of the Idealism which had governed much Western philosophy since the Cartesian discovery of the primacy of consciousness. Only through an intentionality freed of the ego could phenomenology return consciousness to reality :

"As long as the *I* remains a structure of absolute consciousness, one will still be able to reproach phenomenology for being an escapist doctrine, for again pulling a part of man out of the world...."¹⁹

With brilliant insight he moves to attack that inner time, the identity of which it is the function of the Transcendental Ego to guarantee. Consciousness has no inwardness, it is burdened by no inner time, it is a "monstrous spontaneity"²⁰, a 'nothingness' which exists solely as a directedness towards its objects. As such it has no need of ego or other prior entity to bring it into being and safeguard its coherence. In *The Transcendence of the Ego* he sets forth his vision of a fully existentialized consciousness, freed of the old ego, its intentionality directed without mediation towards the objects of a shared reality :

"When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*, there is consciousness of the *streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken*, etc. and non-positional consciousness of consciousness. In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects; it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousness; it is they which present themselves with values, with attractive and repellant qualities—but *me*, I have disappeared; I have annihilated myself. There is no place for *me* on this level. *And this is not a matter of chance, due to a momentary lapse of attention, but happens because of the very structure of consciousness.*"²¹

Sartre has cut away the *epoché* and the ego it reveals and plunged consciousness into the tumultuous world of objects and others. A subjective consciousness fully involved in its actions within the spatio-temporal world has no knowledge of that I brought into being through reflection on inner time. But this unawareness of an I which is as integral a part of the existential consciousness as the Transcendental Ego is of the reductive consciousness, is, Sartre asserts, not the outcome of any peculiarity in the configurations of active consciousness, but an invariant aspect of the structure of each and every conscious act. Consciousness in its very nature, according to Sartre, cannot have awareness of an I brought into being through the activity of self-reflection. The chief function of an existential analogue to the Transcendental Ego—an I which stands as the immanent manifestation of unity in inner time—has been taken over by the objects with which consciousness engages : "it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousness; it is they which present themselves with values....". Bit by bit the chief thrust of his attack is made clear, each description

of the structure of consciousness shares in a negation, either implicit or explicit, of that inner and reflective time necessary to the unity and identity of the existential subjectivity. The I which he negates—"I have disappeared; I have annihilated myself"—is the most powerful and intimate correlative of such a unified inner time.

The consequences of his refusal to allow his phenomenology of existence an inner and subjective time are evident in *The Transcendence of the Ego*. To return to the passage quoted above, without an I and the inner time which underpins it, how can identity whether in the objects of thought or in the subjectivity itself, be accounted for? If objects in reality alone constitute the unity of consciousness, how can significance be accorded past perceptions? If objects in reality "present themselves with values, with attractive and repellant qualities" what has become of the interpretative consciousness which is fundamental to a phenomenology? Sartre's conceptual movement from "objects which present themselves with values. . . ." to the next assertion: "but *me*, I have disappeared. . . . there is no place for *me* on this level. . . ." is phenomenologically untenable. Were Sartre to deny that 'values' and 'qualities' exist outside in reality as characteristics of objects apart from any activity of the intentional consciousness, he would be in the position of denying one of the fundamental tenets of the phenomenological theory of intentionality. Further such a denial would involve an implicit rejection of the ability of consciousness to interpret and choose, a freedom in the interests of which he dissolved the *epochè* and annihilated the Transcendental Ego.

The atomism underlying the negation of the I is made clear in another passage; again it is a description of consciousness:

"Transcendental consciousness is an impersonal spontaneity. It determines its existence at each instant, without our being able to conceive anything *before* it. Thus each instant of our conscious life reveals to us a creation *ex nihilo*. Not a new arrangement, but a new existence."²²

The unified inner time of the identity-bearing subjectivity has shattered and given rise to an atomistic temporality. The present moment is shorn of its horizons of past and future; neither memory nor projection can be made to impinge on time present. And a

consciousness composed of a series of present moments without recall is effectively robbed both of the interpretative powers of inner time and of the I which signifies their unified coherence. Each instant of life, insists Sartre, reveals not a "new arrangement, but a new existence"—"a creation *ex nihilo*." There could be no clearer repudiation of Husserl's notion of an intentionality whose noemata are constantly rearranged, redispersed in time present to imbue the moments of new existence with significance.

Since an atomistic temporality cannot organise the past and project the future, activities vital to the immanent existence of the I, Sartre moves to assert that any I which exists, stands "outside, *in the world*": "The ego is neither formally nor materially in consciousness; it is outside *in the world*. It is a being of the world like the ego of another."²³ But immediately further problems arise. If my ego is given to me not through reflection on my own consciousness and awareness of the identity of its past actions, but in the same manner as the ego of another is given me, how am I to know my ego as my own? *And without an ego I can identify as my own, how am I to exist in consciousness as myself?* Subjective identity is impossible without an inner and reflexively identifiable coherence, and such a coherence cannot exist apart from a recoverable inner time. Atomism cannot allow for such a temporal coherence. But identity must be accounted for, and to do so, Sartre involves himself in a circular explanation. Having rejected an ego which brought into being through reflection stands as the unifying principle in the objects of thought, he invokes a notion which effectively subsumes the previously rejected possibilities of reflection; a notion of "intimacy".²⁴ "My 'I' he explains, 'in effect is no more certain for consciousness than the I of other men. It is only more intimate.'²⁵ To function validly the intimacy of which Sartre speaks, necessarily implies the existence of an inner time which both interprets reality and identifies its interpretations. But Sartre goes on to deny the consciousness which realizes this intimacy any freedom to accord or deny value to experiential reality; in short he denies its interpretative capacities. His denial leads to an ethical position untenable by his own existential standards.

"Ethical situations", he writes in the same work, "exist as part of external reality, forming an objective world of things and

actions, done and to be done, and the actions come to adhere as qualities to the things which call for them".²⁶ He illustrates his point :

"I pity Peter, and I go to his assistance. For my consciousness only one thing exists at that moment : Peter-having-to-be-helped. This quality of "having-to-be-helped" lies in Peter. It acts on me like a force....there is no *me* : I am in the presence of Peter's suffering just as I am in the presence of the colour of this inkstand....".²⁷

The key to Sartre's point lies in his use of the compound "Peter-having-to-be-helped". Peter, in this case the object of consciousness, is, together with the act of consciousness directed towards him, reified and granted the status of a compound whole. The complexities of the interpretative act are blurred over and the value I accord the situation of the other is viewed as though it were the same sort of thing as the colour of his hair or the sound of his voice and as intrinsic a part of him as either. As with the previous example of "streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken", the noetic act which through the interpretative synthesis of inner time allows me to enter into active relation with the object in reality, is not mentioned at all.

Following a plan as yet but roughly sketched of an existential intentionality, the complex of intentional acts ordered in inner time which leads to the conclusion of "Peter-having-to-be-helped", may be broken down into a triadic order which illuminates the activity of the interpretative consciousness :

(i) *I see Peter.* My noetic apprehension is spatial and as such implicitly relates me to him.

(ii) *The significance of Peter's relation to me is organised.* The perceptual act is interiorized and its noematic significance in my inner time is organized through the synthesis of various noemata including that of my act of seeing Peter.

(iii) *I reach a conclusion which is the prelude to an ethical fulfillment of my spatial co-existence with Peter, both by implicitly seeing myself in relation to him and through meditation on the correlative to this spatial fact : his relation to me.* From both my spatial apprehension of Peter which at the first glance interprets myself into perspectival relation to him, and from the subsequent

interiorization of this relation and my inner and temporal meditation on its significance for me, springs this third act of relatedness to the other : the vision of Peter as " Peter-having-to-be-helped ". This third intentional act is ethical; the vision of Peter's condition which " acts on me like a force " ought to be the prelude to my actual helping of him. It is at this third stage that my subjective interpretation of his plight comes to seem a very part of Peter's being. This concluding act of consciousness is the result of the significant organization of the two prior acts. It could not have arisen as an isolated moment of consciousness; the identity of inner time has generated it.

One can only conclude that a thinker of Sartre's brilliance could not have been unaware of such intentional distinctions, of vital importance both to a phenomenology of the existential subjectivity and to the ethical world. It would seem however that his continued emphasis on the equivalent reality of subjective acts and spatial objects has led him to place too great an emphasis on the unified reification of these distinct elements of the shared world and caused him to neglect that subjective principle through which alone acts of consciousness penetrate the world and imbue its objects with value. I refer to the inner time which underpins the spatial interpretations of consciousness.

Having proceeded thus far, a question springs to mind. How far is Sartre who has neglected the inner time through which noemata are organized into significance, justified in calling his theory of consciousness a theory of intentionality ? A short paper of 1939 deals with just this point. To Sartre, the core of Husserl's notion lay in a consciousness which exists as a directedness towards its objects. Objects of perception may not as in Idealist theories be dissolved into the sphere of consciousness. The act of knowledge may not be compared, he argues, to the act of digestion. Only an image of sheer transcendence, of 'bursting towards' can convey its impulsion. In a truly existentialized intentionality this outward impulsion is directed towards the realms of a shared reality. Indeed consciousness, continues Sartre, being totally devoid of inwardness, has no other motion open to it. There is absolutely nothing to hold it back from reality. In sharply polemical fashion he argues :

"You know very well that the tree is not yourself, that you cannot draw it into your dark stomach.... at once consciousness is purified, it is as clear as a strong wind, there is nothing in it but a flight from itself, a slipping out of the self; if perchance, against all odds, you should enter "inside" a consciousness, you would be seized by a whirlwind and flung outside, near the tree.... for consciousness has no inside.... and it is this absolute flight, this refusal to be reified which constitutes a consciousness.... The Philosophy of transcendence has thrown us.... outside into the world, amongst other people."²⁸

But to live in the world of outer reality amongst the others of that world, consciousness has to be more than just a "strong wind" depleted of all inwardness. Between the extremes of the "dark stomach of the Idealist consciousness and the "strong wind" of his Existentialist vision, Sartre can offer no mean. But for a theory of man which deals with that historicity of subjective existence through which choices are made and values accorded or denied reality, in short for the sort of phenomenological theory that Sartre wants to achieve, consciousness must be *subjectively owned*—it must be shown to be *my consciousness* through the personal structures of which *I meditate upon* and *act within reality*. But as we have already seen, Sartre's "absolute consciousness", purified as it is of the I, cannot allow for such subjective acknowledgement. The intimacy he posits as the ground for my recognition of my ego as my own, falls back upon nothing less than those very structures of temporal significance he so strongly rejects.

The inability of consciousness without ego to exist meaningfully in reality is reflected in the experience of Antoine Roquentin, the anti-hero of *Nausea*. The novel was published in 1938 as a fictive illustration of the new theory of consciousness propounded in *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Roquentin is afflicted by an inability to reflect on his own consciousness and discover himself. His reflexive aspirations are constantly frustrated. Unable to escape the confines of the present, Roquentin has no way of ordering it into a meaningful temporality: "I am rejected, abandoned in the present. I try in vain to rejoin the past...."²⁹ His consciousness without ego lacks that inner time necessary to unify the present moment with the rest of conscious existence

and so through a 'new arrangement' imbue the present itself with value. At the end of the novel Roquentin stands alone, shorn of any illusion he might have had of discovering a meaningful I, an I sustained by the inner time of consciousness. There can be no I for the frail reflexive consciousness flickers and vanishes for ever :

"*A pale little memory of myself wavers in my consciousness, Antoine Roquentin. . . . And suddenly the I pales, pales, and finally goes out. Lucid, motionless, empty, the consciousness is situated between the walls; it perpetuates itself. Nobody inhabits it any more. A little while ago somebody said me and my consciousness. Who ?*"³⁰

Roquentin has lost the owned self which could penetrate space around the body and imbue it with intentional significance. Thus the other great anguish of his life is hardly surprising; it springs from his total failure to order space around himself. Spatial objects escape all his fumbling attempts to catch them in the web of meaning. He stands alone in a night mare realm where things have lost even their names : "They are there, grotesque, stubborn, gigantic. . . . I am in the midst of Things which cannot be given names."³¹ No mediation between the nothingness of his consciousness and the opaque profusion of a *res extensa* which escapes all meaning is possible. Lacking an inwardness which through its powers of temporal synthesis could draw spatial objects into relation with itself and grant them a subjective significance, he is doomed to inhabit a chaos. Order is beyond his grasp : the world is rendered absurd. For in a world utterly shorn of the meaning generated by the centrality of the self, not only can objects not be named, but they cannot be related to each other, measured and valued. Even the simplest of spatial relations involved in the perceptual act are *impossible to establish* :

"*Superfluous* : that was the only connection I could establish between those trees, those gates, those pebbles. It was in vain that I tried to *count* the chestnut trees, to situate them in relation to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees; each of them escaped from the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself overflowed. . . ."

³²

Gradually the realization comes to the forlorn Roquentin that he is witnessing nothing less than the "collapse of the human world".³³

Spatial significance granted through inner time is essential to the human world and it is precisely this significance which Sartre renders theoretically untenable. Correlatively the validity of all his analyses of historic existence are called into question. In *Being and Nothingness* published seven years after *The Transcendence of the Ego* a related standpoint towards inner time may be discerned. The prior failure to account for the significant existence of a temporal consciousness in shared reality is carried over and intersubjective significance, the maximal guarantee of a valid historicity is deemed untenable. Self and other are viewed as two "equally isolated systems" between which is preserved "a spatial separation as the very type of exteriority"³⁴ The inwardness of the other cannot justly interpret the space which I inhabit; I cannot grasp the spatial significance of his inner time. Meaningful encounter between us is impossible :

"The Other is defined not as the absence of a consciousness in relation to the body which I see *but by the absence of the world which I perceive, an absence discovered at the very heart of my perception of the world.*"³⁵

The brilliant stratagem of making consciousness as totally dependent on external reality has been carried out at the expense of consciousness itself. Lacking an adequate vision of the relevance of the meaning-endowing structures of inner time to the life of consciousness in the shared world of objects and others, Sartre has inadvertently undermined the very heart of his phenomenology of existence.

Existential Intentionality : Notes towards a Triadic Analysis.

To establish an existential intentionality the temporality of the noetico-noematic organization developed by Husserl must be transmuted from its reduced state into a human modality capable of harbouring the existential self. At the same time the organizational powers of internal time must be guaranteed. Indeed one can speculate as to whether in existentializing this reduced modality one is not in fact returning to Husserl's own starting point. It is possible to conceive of Husserl himself moving for-

ward from nothing less than a primary intuition of the organizing powers of inner time, powers discovered through reflection on his own consciousness and only then formulating the *epoché* which while refining and reducing the reflective data robs the inner time from which the data is gathered, of its manifold connections with the shared spatial world.

Reflection on inner time reveals that existential relativity which links the time of consciousness to the perspectives of spatial perception. All my perception in space is relative to my own position; the perspectives through which knowledge is available to me, determine my knowledge. And it is in its original perspectivity that my spatial knowledge is carried into the inner temporal realm. Thus even the most intimate time of the existential I, far from being shut off from the space of shared existence in the manner of a reduced de-spatialised time, is intimately linked in each and every configuration to the perspectival spatiality of bodily apprehension. This phenomenological principle holds true for simple perception, recollection and projection as well as for the more ambiguous realms of dream or hallucination. The body is the only locus of consciousness and apart from it, consciousness has no way of assimilating reality. The perspectival nature of its knowledge holds true for all modes of existential apprehension. Apart from my body, I cannot imagine a space where I might be located. Any scene I imagine implicitly locates my body as the point from which its spatiality unfurls. To deny this would be to deny that relativity which is of the essence of man; to grant him a knowledge which exists apart from the perspectival relativity of his apprehension would be to elevate him to the level of an omniscient Being.

Through an existential intentionality which indissolubly links the I of consciousness and the I of reality, Sartre's negation of the temporal dimension of selfhood is overcome. One turns to the subjective instrument which actualizes the temporal consciousness into the spatial self: the lived body. It is through the lived body that a perspectival space is implicated in the temporal synthesis of consciousness. Of the unique nature of the lived body, Merleau-Ponty writes:

"We have become accustomed, through the influence of the Cartesian tradition to jettison the subject....we have the trans-

parency of an object with no secret recesses, the transparency of a subject which is nothing but what it thinks it is....there are two senses and two only of the word 'exist': one exists as a thing or else one exists as a consciousness. *The experience of our own body, on the other hand, reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existing.*³⁶

The "ambiguous" existence of the lived body stems from its nature both as a subject possessed of the intentionality of inner time and as object occupying a place in the extension of the spatial world. To reject either pole of its existence and fall back upon a Cartesian dichotomy would involve a total rejection of the human self.

The spatial self is brought into being through the configuration of intentionality the lived body generates round itself. Perceiving space it imbues it with order by relating objects to its own implicit position and organizing their perspectival neomata through the significative synthesis of inner time. Merleau-Ponty tells us both of the historicity the lived body thus brings into being for itself and of the perspectival space within the bounds of which this historicity is attained.³⁷ His phenomenology of the body brings us this far in our attempt to illuminate the nature of an existential intentionality. But in what manner are the perspectives of spatial perception implicated in the temporal synthesis of existential consciousness? In answer to this question which probes the structure of existential intentionality one must uncover some of the layers of interpretation involved in the complexities of human signification. I choose an incident from Proust for analysis, for Marcel, the protagonist of *Remembrance of Things Past* constantly involves himself in creating precisely that unified temporal order which Sartre rejects. *Nausea* itself is directed in part as an attack on Proustian intentionality. In the celebrated incident of the spires of Martinville dealt with below, Marcel attempts to establish his version of that "human world of measures, of quantities, of bearings"³⁸ which collapses all around Roquentin.

The young Marcel is given a lift by an old doctor and allowed to sit on the box by the coachman and watch the world flow by. Suddenly at a bend in the road he is struck with a strange delight:

"I caught sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, on which the setting sun was playing, while the movement of the carriage and the windings of the road seemed to keep them continually changing their position; and then of a third steeple, that of Vieuxvicq, which, although separated from them by a hill and a valley, and rising from rather higher ground is the distance appeared none the less to be standing by their side."³⁹

His consciousness of the spatial perspectives through which the landscape is given to him, imbues the whole of the passage. The "special pleasure"⁴⁰ he feels, rises out of the harmonizing variations between the changing points from which he catches sight of the steeples. In the constant variation of perspective which relates the boy to the steeples, a curious interpenetration of spatial planes is achieved, one which distorts his apprehension of the actual distance between himself and the three steeples but heightens his awareness of the lived or emotive distances which bind him to them. His sensitivity to the perspectival nature of human spatiality leads him to ponder the relationship between his own self and the steeples which fill him with such delight. Through wonder at the delight evoked in him by the curiosities of a spatial knowledge, Marcel is led to the second level of human intentionality. He passes beyond his perspectival apprehension of spatial phenomena into the realms of inner time. The spatial perspectives yield noemata to the synthesising powers of inner time. Through their organization in his unique, inner time, his perspectival apprehension of space is analysed and granted an individualized significance. This interiorization of the perspectival noemata gathered through spatial interpretation and their analysis through redisposition in inner time, represents the second level of existential intentionality.

Soon, through the pressures of a temporal interpretation his subjectivity moves from the level of interiorization to the third and culminating level of intentionality: expressive signification. The transition between the two levels is brought out in the following passage. Marcel is speaking of the interiorized vision of the steeples:

"Their outlines and their sunlit surfaces, as though they had been a sort of rind, were stripped apart; a little of what they

had concealed from me became apparent; an idea came into my head which had not existed for me a moment earlier, framed itself in words".⁴¹

Through points of emphasis peculiar to a Romantic epistemology, the act of signification is clearly depicted as springing out of the interiorized interpretation of spatial knowledge. Borrowing pencil and paper from the doctor, the boy starts writing. The words which occur to him order themselves into one of the most exquisite descriptions in the novel. They evoke a human value which has risen out of the complexities of subjective interpretation.

A triadic motion of consciousness underpins the interrelation of these three basic levels of an existential intentionality. In the first and outward movement, consciousness is projected into the spatial world into the act of perception. A perspectival space is instinctively ordered around the lived body. In the second, inward movement enacted if the spatial perception calls for it, the perceptual perspectives are *interiorized*. Consciousness draws into itself in reflection on the meaning of the objects of knowledge for its inner time. The synthetic powers of inner time are activated through the drawing in of the noemata. In the third and culminating motion, once again only enacted if required by the prior acts of interpretation, consciousness thrusts outwards in expressive signification. This triadic *out-in-out* movement fulfils the intentionality of an existential meaning-giving by returning the subjectivity to the reality in which its meaning can have a *shared* validity.

This triadic configuration implicates all three modalities of human time : perception, recollection and projection. The noeses of present perception even as they are interiorized, become past acts. Their noemata must be reconstituted in memory and then, through the power of an interiorized interpretation, impelled into the future in the act of expression. Thus the moment of expressive signification is a present moment brought into being only through the ability of a temporal consciousness to interpret past noemata and order them in a fresh thrust of human intentionality. The potentialities of a temporal synthesis underlie the significant order.

In the example given above, Marcel's act of creating order is aesthetic in nature : his significant standpoint to the objects of perception being primarily meditative. Elsewhere as in the example quoted earlier of "Peter-having-to-be-helped", the standpoint is primarily active and may give rise to an ethical act. Expressive signification, the third and culminating level of intentionality is either meditative or active. If a meditative signification gives rise to an expressive order which is aesthetic in nature, the spatio-temporal configurations of the intentionality which under-pins that order may be analysed and the phenomenological dimensions of the art-work revealed. If an active signification expresses itself in terms which may be analysed ethically, the spatial activity of the individual may be bracketed, analysed in relation to the temporal perspectives which generate it, and particularised notions of subjective existence such as guilt or authenticity, illuminated. In no instance however can the structures of human signification, whether meditative or active, exist apart from the deployment of inner time. And it is in relation to inner time that they must be analysed if an adequate phenomenology of existence is to be established.

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NOTES

1. The reduced sphere of consciousness was the arena within which Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology was to operate. His vision of a phenomenology which was to concern itself solely with those aspects of the object of knowledge brought within the realm of consciousness was realized through use of the *epoché*. Through deployment of the *epoché* the reduced nature of the data of consciousness could be guaranteed. Of the *epoché* first outlined in *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1907) and developed in *Ideas* (1913), Husserl writes: "I use the phenomenological *epoché* which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence" (*Dasein*). *Ideas, General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (London : Allen and Unwin, 1952 ; pp. 110-111

2. Ibid. p. 261
3. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations, An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague : Nijhoff, 1970) p. 39
4. Ibid. p. 40
5. Ibid. p. 41
6. loc. cit.
7. Ibid. p. 43
8. Ibid. p. 43
9. Indeed Husserl has delimited the noema as an ideal unity within the life of consciousness identifiable with meaning itself see *Ideas* p. 258
10. Aron Gurwitsch, "On the Intentionality of Consciousness", *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin Farber (New York : Greenwood Press, 1968) p. 83
11. loc. cit. (my italics)
12. *Ideas*, p. 110
13. Ibid. p. 15
14. Ibid. p. 153
15. loc. cit.
16. René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method, Meditations and Principles* trans. J. Veitch (London : Dent, 1969) p. 43
17. It is not with this earlier stage of Husserlian phenomenology but with the last vision of phenomenology developed by Husserl in his great unfinished work (*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*), that the plan of an existential intentionality I outline in my concluding section, may be held to be compatible. But the interdependancies between a developed notion of existential intentionality and the 'Lebenswelt' of *Crisis* must await a later exposition.
18. Jean-paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick (New York : Noonday Press, 1971) p. 40
19. Ibid. p. 105
20. Ibid. 99
21. Ibid. pp. 48-49
22. Ibid. pp. 98-99
23. Ibid. p. 31
24. Ibid. p. 85. The circularity of Sartre's argument has been previously noted by Maurice Natanson, *Literature, Philosophy and the Social Sciences* (The Hague : Nijhoff, 1968) pp. 31-32
25. Sartre, op. cit. p. 104
26. Ibid. p. 56
27. loc. cit.
28. Sartre, "Une Idée Fondamentale de la Phénoménologie de Husserl." *Situations I* (Paris : Gallimard, 1947) pp. 32-34. (My translation).

29. Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. R. Baldick (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1965) p. 53
30. Ibid. p. 241
31. Ibid. p. 180
32. Ibid. p. 184
33. loc. cit.
34. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness : An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. H. Barnes (London : Methuen, 1969) p. 231
35. Ibid. p. 256
36. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans, C. Smith (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962) p. 198
37. See for instance "Eye and Mind", *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty* ed. A. L. Fisher (New York : Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969) pp. 272-273; *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 239-240
38. *Nausea* p. 184
39. Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff. 12 vols. (London : Chatto and Windus, 1941) 1. 247
40. loc. cit.
41. Ibid. pp. 248-249

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