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# Bergson's and Sartre's Account of the Self in Relation to the Transcendental Ego

*Roland Breeur*

## Abstract

In *The Transcendence of the Ego* Sartre deals with the idea of the self and of its relation to what he calls 'pure consciousness'. Pure consciousness is an impersonal transcendental field, in which the self is produced in such a way that consciousness thereby disguises its 'monstrous spontaneity'. I want to explore to what extent the ego is to be understood as a result of absolute consciousness. I also claim that the idea of the self Sartre has in mind is Bergson's 'moi profond'. Since this 'deeper self' has to be understood as a result of an impersonal transcendental field, it loses its central position in consciousness. Sartre claims that the ego is not transcendental, as Husserl had claimed, but transcendent to consciousness. But can the role of Husserl's transcendental ego be reduced to that transcendent Bergsonian 'deeper self'? Isn't there something irreducible in Husserl's transcendental ego?

**Keywords:** Sartre; phenomenology; consciousness; 'deeper self' (Bergson); transcendental ego; personal identity

Sartre's conception of the ego in *The Transcendence of the Ego* could be summarized by Parfit's famous sentence: 'Identity is not what matters.' Identity is dependent on unity, and thus a 'supplementary' fact. But Sartre's conception can only affirm such a thesis because he interprets the presence of the I in function of the unity of the consciousness.<sup>1</sup> And as he concludes that in order to remain a unity, consciousness does not need to appeal to any such unifying and individualizing I, he consequently purifies it of any presence of an ego. The ego is neither formally nor materially in consciousness: 'it is outside, in the world' (p. 31/13). The ego only appears at the level of psychic intimacy, not at the level of pure immanence. This latter remains purely translucent and empty. The ego is an

object *for* consciousness, not *in* consciousness. 'Like Husserl, we are persuaded that our psychic and psycho-physical me is a transcendent object which must fall before the epoché. But we raise the following question: is not this psychic and psycho-physical me enough?' (*TE* 36/18).

I don't think so. In order to claim the emptiness of consciousness Sartre has to reduce the role of Husserl's 'pure ego' to that of the 'real Ego'.<sup>2</sup> And consequently the function of identity (the pure ego is a 'numerische Identität') to that of unity and individuality.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, I suspect that he masked the Husserlian ego as 'numerical Identity'<sup>4</sup> with a kind of ego as a synthesis of unity. As a consequence, what he will say about the 'constitution of the ego as pole of actions, states and qualities' concerns an ego that is closer, for instance, to a Bergsonian view of the 'profound self' ('moi profond'). This implies that, although Sartre's description of consciousness as a 'spontaneity beyond freedom' is able to 'deconstruct' Bergson's 'moi profond' or 'conscience pure', something of the ego remains untouched. Sartre's own 'pure consciousness' (as described in *TE* 102/83) transgresses that self as inner 'concrete totality' and impinges on and compromises its integrity. Nevertheless, something of the ego, more precisely something of Husserl's pure ego, resists that destitution, because its role as identity surpasses that of merely securing the unity of consciousness.

To summarize: Sartre neglects the problem of the identity of the ego and makes it dependent on unity. I will elucidate this reduction more precisely, by arguing that he obscures Husserl's 'pure ego' under that of a Bergsonian 'moi profond', and he does so in a purely Bergsonian gesture: he reduces the quantitative (numerical identity of the pure ego) to the purely qualitative determination of the ego.<sup>5</sup>

### 1 Bergson's 'Pure Consciousness'

I will first analyse Bergson's conception of the 'moi profond' in detail in order to demonstrate that exactly this ego Sartre has in mind. It is this kind of ego that he will reject, as the deceptive self-representation of consciousness. But in radicalizing Bergson's idea of duration or 'conscience pure' as pre-reflective consciousness, Sartre will also fall prey to Bergson's strategy: the reduction of quantity to quality. This demonstrates how strong Bergson's influence still was on the young French phenomenologists. As he confesses in a well-known interview with Michel Rybalka, it was the study of duration (*durée*) that made him want to do philosophy: 'I was struck by it, and it became a subject for me on which I reflected at great length.'<sup>6</sup> This influence of Bergson is obvious, for instance, in Sartre's interpretation of Husserl's 'Erlebisse' in terms of (the Bergsonian) 'le vécu',<sup>7</sup> and in the terms he uses (duration, pure consciousness, etc.). Bergson's intuitions about the self and the mind remained omnipresent in the French

philosophy of that period, partly because they stood opposed to the development of the well-represented idealism of neo-Kantianism (Brunschvicg), against which Bergson himself had to fight.<sup>8</sup>

No wonder that Bergson's analyses of time as a pre-reflective kind of cogito ('conscience pure') are framed in a Kantian context. His well-known critique of abstract, quantitatively determined time, which mathematics, physics or even common sense substitute for real qualitative time, is indirectly a critique of the ongoing opinions of the French idealists of that time or of 'kantisme universitaire'<sup>9</sup> (Lachelier, Boutroux, etc.). For Bergson, a description of the self first needs to clear the mind of these idealistic surfaces: inner time as consciousness has been reduced to a succession in space. Bergson's theory of time can thus be compared with the phenomenological approaches of the levels of temporality.<sup>10</sup> Like Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, Bergson will stress that an original level of temporality is covered by a more 'vulgar', abstract or objective conception of time. This time belongs to clocks and calendars and can be compared to spatiality, since every duration is interpreted through the model of geometric extension that things in the world possess. Immanent time (time as lived 'from within'), on the other hand, is the very interiority of the self. It is the time which belongs to the duration of mental acts and experiences, events of the conscious life (sensations, thoughts, etc.). As a consequence, it is important to understand the nature of that interiority in order to describe the nature of the self and of personal identity.

Nevertheless, Bergson proceeds very strategically in his approach to the problem of time: the real key (and this is often forgotten) to his critique of the contamination of time by space (and of the conception of a 'homogeneous time') is, strikingly, Kant's schematism, and more precisely Kant's scheme for the category of magnitude (*Grösse*).<sup>11</sup> Let us examine his critique in more detail.

A scheme, Kant says, is a 'mediating representation' ('vermittelnde Vorstellung') which helps in applying the pure categories of the understanding to the pure form of 'inneren Sinn': time. In this sense, every scheme is a 'transcendental determination of time' ('Transzendente Zeitbestimmung'), since time is the pure form of inner sense (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B176f.). The scheme of the category of magnitude is number (*Zahl*), 'a representation which comprehends the successive addition of one to one (homogeneous quantities)'.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, every experience (*Empfindung*) must have a degree or an intensity, which can be measured.

Significantly, Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*<sup>13</sup> opens with this sentence: 'It is usually admitted that states of consciousness, sensations, feelings, passions, efforts, are capable of growth and diminution; we are even told that a sensation can be said to be twice, thrice, four times as intense as another sensation of the same kind.'<sup>14</sup>

Kant will indeed affirm that every phenomenon and every (sensuous) 'intuition' has an 'extensive quantity'. By this he means a magnitude (*Grösse*) where the representations of the parts renders possible (and therefore necessarily precedes) the representation of the whole (B203). In order to prove that a flock of 20 ('gleichartige') sheep is bigger than a flock of 15, you can, after adding up every sheep, show in which measure the smaller flock (qua magnitude) fits into the bigger one.

But this is exactly the problematic Bergson starts from: a number is not the determination of time and succession, but of space and simultaneity, of the juxtaposition of the unities which must be counted. Further, the difference in magnitude (*Grösse*) is a difference that is based on a relation of container and contained: 'For it is beyond doubt that, in the natural series of numbers, the later number exceeds the earlier, but the very possibility of arranging the numbers in ascending order arises from their having to each other relations of container and contained, so that we feel ourselves able to explain precisely in what sense one is greater than the other' (*TW 2/O 6*).

Thus, for Bergson, what determines interiority is not time, but space. This explains the illusion that one and the same experience in the phenomenal field could be more or less intense. But what do we really mean when we say that we find something more or less beautiful, more or less interesting, etc.?

According to Bergson, this phenomenon cannot be described using the premisses of Kantianism. By referring to the priority of space as the form of number and, indirectly, the form of what Kant thought to be interiority, Bergson inverts the hierarchy of the two pure forms in the 'Transcendentale Ästhetik' of the first Critique. But he does so in a kind of fidelity to the Kantian conviction that interiority (inner sense) is structured by time. Kant's time was probably only masked space; but thanks to his 'critique of the critique', Bergson opens a route to originary, non-contaminated time, and thus to 'real' interiority.<sup>15</sup> This interiority is purely determined by qualitative differences, and it is only by the intrusion of space that these differences were quantified.<sup>16</sup> Space renders possible a process of objectification or abstraction of the inner life or of the world, which can only be accomplished by the intuition of a 'homogeneous medium' (*TW 97/O 66*) thanks to which unities can be distinguished independently of their qualitative determinations.<sup>17</sup> This is the reason why we believe time to be a juxtaposition of qualitatively identical unities, differing only by their place in an abstract space. But what precisely is that pure time, that non-contaminated inner duration?<sup>18</sup>

Bergson's determination of that duration is, in a first movement, also negative. It is that which remains when every spatial difference is put out of play. Time is consequently defined as a 'multiplicité indistincte ou qualitative', not broken by spatial intervals. And if space is the medium where

everything present is given all at once ('tout d'un coup'), then time is what prevents everything from being pre-given.<sup>19</sup> This means that the conscious totality of all the present unities will create a surplus which cannot be foreseen. For instance, with the help of my past experiences and all the information available, I can try to imagine by means of association and imagination how my trip will be. But the totality of the experience will produce an excess that could not have been grasped by the anticipation of distinct facts. The whole evokes a surplus that transcends the sum of the unities. Time is consequently, for Bergson, a kind of *Gestalt* that produces the emergence of a self-transcendence out of an inner organization or pre-reflective duration.

How does Bergson define that pre-reflective duration? A first definition describes time ('duration', 'conscience pure', 'moi profond') as 'a mutual penetration, an interconnexion (une 'solidarité') and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought' (*TW* 101).<sup>20</sup> A second definition describes it with the paradoxical image of something that remains 'ever the same and ever changing' (*TW* 101).<sup>21</sup>

But what is at stake is a conception of the self, a self which permeates the totality of the lived experiences and is active in all the parts or the faculties of its mind. The self is not outside or behind the inner life, it is not a punctual thing, but exists only within the manifold of conduct and the emotions.

### *First definition*

The idea of 'mutual penetration' or of the 'multiplicity of interpenetration' of the states of consciousness does not mean a lack of 'structure',<sup>22</sup> or a pure accumulation of successive moments (which presupposes space), but a 'progrès dynamique'. With the image of the 'permeability' of inner states, Bergson aims at a form of succession and of temporality where all the elements are internally organized, 'melting, so to speak, into one another', as happens with the notes of a melody.<sup>23</sup> In other words, he aims at a kind of synthesis and organization of states of consciousness that are not objectified, which are not yet separated from one another by space. The unities of duration are experienced in continuity and are not measured by objective time, and thus are not separated by any internal distance. We tend to represent our temporal experiences or the flow as sequences quickly following one another, like a film. But in order to live the flow as duration, our experience must *endure* itself and not be reduced to the 'momentary flash' of atomistic sense data. The unities of duration are thus fused together so that it remains possible to keep the immediate past 'noch im Griff', to retain it, at a moment when our attention is absorbed by the present.<sup>24</sup>

Bergson, a subtle phenomenologist, gives wonderful examples of this 'retentionality':

When I follow with my eyes on the dial of a clock the movement of the hand (*aiguille*) which corresponds to the oscillations of the pendulum, I do not measure duration, as seems to be thought; I merely count simultaneities, which is very different. Outside of me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum; for nothing is left of the past positions. Within myself a process of organization or interpenetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration. It is because I endure in this way that I picture to myself what I call the past oscillations of the pendulum at the same time as I perceive the present oscillation.  
(*TW 108/ O 72*)

Accordingly, it is this inner organization of the inner states of consciousness which renders possible succession in space. If this inner, pre-objectifying process were not what it is, we would not be able to experience any movement in reality. Consciousness possesses an inner dynamic which precedes the objectifying synthesis effectuated by a reflective or explicit consciousness. This inner dynamic builds upon a kind of 'incipient self-identification'<sup>25</sup> constituting its own continuous identity. This means that the inner duration organizes itself, without the help of an outer consciousness or a transcendental ego. The ego itself does not remain outside this inner process, but is itself constituted by it. This is the reason why a melody can touch us, or even sings me to sleep: between the organization and the I, there is no space, no distance.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, when Bergson asks about the origin of spatialization ('*déroulement dans l'espace*'), or even how we are able to count a succession in space – which is a question about the origin of *number* – he must be referring to this inner duration. The ultimate condition for numbers, then, is not space, because in space there is no real succession, but only simultaneity and juxtaposition. Succession in space presupposes a 'simultaneity' which itself presupposes the inner organization of consciousness.<sup>27</sup> As in Husserl, 'the display of objective time (succession in space) occurs to us only because we possess subjective, immanent time as a condition for such time'.<sup>28</sup> The process by which we are able to count units and make them into a multiplicity has two aspects:

on the one hand we assume that they are identical, which is conceivable only on condition that these units are ranged alongside each other in a homogeneous medium; but on the other hand the third unit, for example, when added to the other two, alters the nature, the appearance and, as it were, the rhythm of the whole; without

this interpenetration and this, so to speak, qualitative progress, no addition would be possible. Hence it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality.

(*TW 123/ O 82*)

Quantity owes its reality to quality, to that inner pre-objective progress or self-affection.

### *Second definition*

Bergson's time is self-awareness of itself, and thus 'pure consciousness'. There is no consciousness exterior or prior to the inner flow which would have to reconstruct the continuity of isolated sequences. Duration is consciousness; it is the way the inner life manifests its being conscious. There is no difference in level between the flow and the mind as such.

Consciousness is a concrete, organic totality or unity which is affected by every new element (cf. 'the third unit' in the quotation above). This self-affection of time implies that every new element causes a total reorganization, 'alters the nature of the whole', so that the sense of the past alters permanently according to the new development in the present. Hence the core of Bergson's second definition of duration as a being which is ever the same and ever changing. That duration remains 'the same' means that it is pure reorganization (Goldstein would say 'Gestaltung' and 'Neugestaltung') of the organic whole of states of consciousness towards the future. The sameness refers here to the fact that duration remains itself, and that as soon as its nature stiffens, it causes alienation.<sup>29</sup> Time does not flow along in the way a melody does: it does not itself presuppose another, more basic flow in order to be structured as duration. On the contrary, time is the most basic structure of everything that lives as temporal (feelings, thoughts, sensations, etc.) and it 'chugs along automatically and constantly, neither faster nor slower'.<sup>30</sup> Its identity is thus dependent on the flexibility of the whole, the unity and its inner 'Gestaltung'. But Bergson also adds something: time as constant reorganization (which is exactly the articulation of the unity between 'sameness and changing') is at the same time 'progrès dynamique'. This refers to the fact that nothing in life gets lost. The past remains present in life in a latent state (and thus not in the form of representation), so that each new experience should imply a real enrichment. Time is creativity and growth. It spontaneously creates a new organic whole which transcends the older stage. The self does not explicitly interfere; it undergoes the inner evolution of its experiences. The self is both flexible and continuously the same throughout its conscious lifetime. Its own active life and thoughts are the expression of this continuous adaptation and inner passive organization:



the self does not achieve this duration deliberately, by way of explicit selection and composition. On the contrary, its decisions are built upon that passive layer and express the inner evolution of the mind. I suddenly experience that I no longer desire something I always wanted, I experience the fact that my will has changed, but not because I decided to change my mind; it is because my mind changed despite my will that I no longer decide and desire the way I did. Again, that the meaning of my childhood changes according to my evolution, refers to an inner process which I cannot manipulate. I dwell totally and pre-objectively in that inner process. Therefore the ego is intimate and cannot be grasped as an object. Only an intuition makes a relation to that inner self accessible.

This intuition and coincidence with the deeper self is what Bergson considers to be the condition of freedom. I am free when I completely coincide with that inner duration, when I am thus completely myself and when my act reflects my being, when my act totally emerges out of my real self, and not out of any social pressure. I am what I do and think. I am my choices. I recognize myself in them: no space distances my acts from the inner self. Jankelevitch will comment: 'Mes actes libres sont de toutes les choses dont je suis l'auteur celles qui m'appartiennent le plus essentiellement. Je me reconnais en elles encore mieux que l'artiste dans son œuvre, mieux que le père dans ses enfants.'<sup>31</sup>

My decisions do not presuppose an ego who would choose between objectified motives. Every unity, sentiment, decision, motive, state, etc. represents the whole from which it emanates.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the inner process in which decisions, motives and self are intertwined gives rise to free decisions. 'It is the whole soul, in fact, which gives rise to the free decisions: and the act will be so much freer the more the dynamic series with which it is connected tends to be the fundamental self' (*TW* 167/ *O* 110). The free act is a realization of the self.<sup>33</sup>

The self in this totality appears to be what Sartre would call the permanent synthesis of the psychic. It is this self he aims at in his conception of egological consciousness. Sartre describes it both as a synthesis of activity and passivity and as a synthesis of interiority and transcendence (*TE* 71–88/ 54–70).

The ego is a synthesis of passivity and activity that has no need of exterior support in order to remain a unity. The ego is immersed in consciousness as in an 'indissoluble totality'. This unity stems from the 'absolute indissolubility of the elements which cannot be conceived as separated, save by abstraction' (*TE* 73/ 57). This is, of course, an allusion to the first definition of duration. The self is indeed Bergsonian: it is immersed in consciousness and 'compromised' by its states and qualities. The ego is never indifferent to them, and is nothing outside the concrete totality they form; rather, 'it is the infinite totality of states and of actions',

of passivity and activity. Therefore it always appears at the horizon of states and activities,<sup>34</sup> always represented by each of them, just as in duration every moment represents the totality out of which it emanates. There are no states that would overwhelm a pure, distant ego. The states and the ego grow together in a creative totality, a 'creatio ex nihilo' (*TE* 77/ 60). The ego maintains them 'through a genuine, continuous creation' (*TE* 78/ 61).<sup>35</sup> In this conception, the self appears as that creative totality out of which qualities, states and actions emerge. The self is their deeper source.

If this creation is the articulation of the totality itself, and not of an ego outside it, the self must be given as 'more internal' than what it produces: the ego is a synthesis of interiority. And since 'one *lives* interiority . . . but does not contemplate it' (*TE* 84/66), the ego is given as pure intimacy, the deep interiority of consciousness. The very 'intimacy' of the self implies that I cannot have a truly external viewpoint on it: 'it is too much present'. If we step back 'for vantage, the me accompanies' (*TE* 86/ 68).

The ego is consequently given as 'indistinctness' *in* consciousness. Only by abstraction can one differentiate between the ego and its actions, states or qualities. Which also means that it proffers itself only 'indirectly' and inadequately through the states, actions, etc. in which I recognize myself. I cannot focus on it frontally, but only 'out of the corner of the eye'. Sartre explains: 'This is the indistinctness, for example, that one may find in the famous "interpenetrative multiplicity" of Bergson' (*TE* 85/67). Every creation of the ego (if really free) is 'reabsorbed' in the 'concrete totality', into that interpenetrative multiplicity (*TE* 86/68). But this experience of the self is only an effect of the manner in which consciousness 'poisons' itself . . .

## 2 Sartre's 'Pure Consciousness'

Consciousness is a pure spontaneity that produces the 'pseudo-spontaneity' of a Bergsonian free will. The 'moi profond' is only a 'hypostatized' spontaneity (*TE* 81/ 63) and becomes a 'bastard spontaneity, which magically preserves its creative power even while becoming passive'. Bergson's freedom already presupposes a pure spontaneity which cares nothing about the egological one. It is a 'monstrous spontaneity' (*TE* 99/ 80) that 'constitutes the ego as a false representation of itself' (*TE* 101/ 82). And this monstrosity is immediately linked to the very nature of consciousness described by phenomenology. Indeed, the phenomenological conception of consciousness 'renders the unifying and individualizing role of the I totally useless' (*TE* 40/ 23). Worse, this ego is a 'hindrance' that introduces opacity into a translucent consciousness.<sup>36</sup> If, for Sartre, a psychological or non-phenomenological approach refers to an ego, it is because it does not describe pure consciousness but the 'psychic', self-deceptive, opaque consciousness.

But why is a pure consciousness so monstrous? This monstrosity must be related to the very 'law of its existence' (*TE* 40/24). What is this law? Consciousness has no need of a unifying ego, because it unifies itself autonomously and by virtue of its own absolute spontaneity. The unity of consciousness stems from its nature as 'intentionality' and 'self-awareness'. Consciousness 'unifies itself by escaping from itself' (*TE* 38/21) in such a manner that it intrinsically and perpetually remains referring to itself (*TE* 39/22). Consciousness can be defined as 'self-conscious self-transcendence'.

Why must consciousness be self-awareness of itself? Self-awareness is a necessary condition for being intentionally conscious of something: I cannot be conscious of the presence of a stain on my sheet of paper without being aware of that consciousness. A consciousness that would be oblivious to itself would be absurd and internally contradictory.<sup>37</sup>

This would mean that I am absent in my seeing, and thus not really absorbed by the object in the world. But, in addition, the core of Sartre's description turns around the idea that this self-consciousness is not of the same nature as the intentional consciousness of transcendent objects, that consequently consciousness does not appear to itself in the way that objects of the world appear. Sartre refers in this context to Husserl's time-consciousness.<sup>38</sup> Pre-reflective consciousness is a kind of retention, since this latter is precisely the way in which consciousness remains present to itself in a non-objectifying manner. It is not present to itself as it is present to an object. (According to Sartre, the object is always outside consciousness.) 'Retention' is not the conservation of the present in the past, but the prolongation of the past in the present.<sup>39</sup> That prolongation must be subordinated to the continuity of the present, and is therefore an immediate way of 'considering', of being non-thetically conscious of that to which consciousness is intentionally related. This 'considering' is spontaneous and not dependent on any reflective act (such as a decision similar to: 'I must keep my attention on . . .'). Self-awareness is a non-reflective consciousness of itself which is prior to reflective self-consciousness, to the cogito, to the intention of remaining intentionally directed to the object outside consciousness. '[T]he unreflected has the ontological priority over the reflected because the unreflected consciousness does not need to be reflected in order to exist' (*TE* 57–8/41).<sup>40</sup>

Sartre therefore claims that, for example, 'the immediate consciousness which I have of perceiving does not permit me either to judge or to will or to be ashamed. It does not know my perception, does not posit it; all that there is of intention in my consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the world'.<sup>41</sup> It also implies the idea that nothing in the transcending or centrifugal act 'motivates' a self-consciousness. This latter is not awakened by its own interest in the things my intentionality is directed towards ('I decide to look . . .'). This would make non-reflective consciousness reflective, one that can be related to its own intentional act

as to an object of the world. On the contrary, Sartre claims quite firmly that self-consciousness is ontologically independent.<sup>42</sup>

Self-consciousness is immediate and does not posit seeing as an object. It cannot be compared to a kind of knowledge (Alain: 'Savoir c'est savoir qu'on sait'). Such an interpretation would break the unity of consciousness down into the duality of subject-object.<sup>43</sup> But all objects, Sartre says again and again, are outside consciousness.<sup>44</sup> And therefore, self-consciousness is completely submitted to self-transcendence. 'In order to be non-thetic self-consciousness, consciousness must be a thetic consciousness of something . . .'<sup>45</sup> This means that there is no pure self-affection without some transcendence. This inner self-consciousness would surreptitiously smuggle into itself objects of the world (e.g., sensations, feelings, 'states' and qualities). The *self* of self-awareness is the intentional act as absolute openness or radical self-transcendence. The transparency (*self-consciousness*) is immediately linked to the intentional act that tears consciousness outside itself.<sup>46</sup> To that extent, there is no transparency that would touch anything prior to that intentional act. Thus this act is completely spontaneous. Nothing *in* consciousness motivates the intentional act. Nothing *in* 'me', no motivations or inclinations push me towards objects. I am attracted by an object only insofar as an object is attractive.<sup>47</sup> To hate someone is not to express an innate tendency to hatred, but 'c'est se trouver soudain en face d'un étranger dont on vit, dont on souffre d'abord la qualité objective de "haïssable"'.<sup>48</sup> If we take the example of perception, we must claim that to perceive or to look at something means only: 's'éclater vers . . . là-bas, par-delà soi, vers ce qui n'est pas soi'.<sup>49</sup> Consciousness is completely outside itself; it finds in the world the objects to which it directs its rays. This centrifugal consciousness has no content. It is purified, 'claire comme un grand vent'. Consciousness is without interiority: it is pure openness, and pure openness has no content. In order to have any content, a thing must be closed.<sup>50</sup> Consciousness has nothing substantial to it: it is 'total emptiness (since the world is outside it)'.<sup>51</sup> And if this is true, we can conclude that consciousness has little need of anything except itself in order to acquire and constitute a unity. We can therefore understand why Sartre affirms that the unity is conferred by the objects it relates to: 'In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects; it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousnesses; it is they which present themselves with values' (*TE* 49/32). And in addition, the pre-reflective self-consciousness guarantees the unbroken continuity of this intentional act.

It is indeed quite significant that, concerning the relation of pre-reflective consciousness and transcendence, Sartre inverts Bergson's relation between self-consciousness and transcendence. For Bergson, transcendence is an emanation of the inner pre-reflective organization. This

interiority recognizes itself in the act. But for Sartre, self-consciousness cannot motivate self-transcendence, since it would introduce a passivity into that pure spontaneity or activity. It would make the intentional act dependent on something prior to itself, and thus it would introduce opacity into the translucent self-consciousness as consciousness of the intentional act. And, as we have already noted, this translucence is not a secondary characteristic, but a structural part of every original intentional act,<sup>52</sup> totally unconditioned and unmotivated. The implication of this unconditioned self-awareness is the fact that consciousness becomes radically absolute: 'Indeed, the existence of consciousness is an absolute because consciousness is consciousness of itself' (*TE* 40/24). It is self-consciousness that makes consciousness as consciousness possible, that makes consciousness more than a positive, neurological 'reflex'. It is present to itself as to an act that tears consciousness outside itself and throws it into the world. Self-consciousness is the articulation of an inner non-coincidence.<sup>53</sup> And if, for Bergson, the non-coincidence is only due to an accidental detachment from inner self-consciousness, for Sartre it is precisely self-consciousness that introduces into consciousness a fundamental fissure. 'The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist at a distance from itself as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness. Thus in order for a *self* to exist, it is necessary that the unity of this being includes its own nothingness as the nihilisation of identity.'<sup>54</sup> In other words, non-coincidence is not the effect of an ego that has lost its attachment to its deeper self. Sartre radicalizes the notion of pre-reflective consciousness, by purifying it of all contents. It is not the pre-reflective organization of inner reality. The Sartrean consciousness is never in itself, and it is therefore frightened by its own spontaneity, because it is so absolute, and will never coincide with an ego or with a concrete freedom. The creative spontaneity of consciousness, in contrast to Bergson's duration, is not continuous reorganization, but ceaseless creation, without taking into account previous achievements or acquisitions: 'Not a new arrangement, but a new existence' (*TE* 99/ 79).<sup>55</sup> Since nothing motivates consciousness, it cannot take advantage of anything in being, it owes its existence only to itself, and there is no affinity between consciousness and being: 'L'être est indigeste. Du même coup, la conscience prend conscience qu'elle ne peut ni produire ni supprimer l'être.'<sup>56</sup> Reality reveals itself to a radical openness that is purified of every presupposition and inclination, that reveals its brute contingency in spite of every 'Verstehen'. Being is without reason, and the uncovering of being remains contingent because nothing in consciousness motivates it. On the other hand, we must conclude that nothing uncovered by consciousness remains in consciousness, because it would load down consciousness with something other than itself (thus opacity). The revealed truth, as in *Vérité et existence*, withers in the 'nuit de l'être' and dies.<sup>57</sup>

One can sense from all of this that, for Sartre, consciousness seems to have no roots and, being so absolute, it scarcely has a past. It also becomes clear that, as distinct from Bergson's duration, Sartre's 'pure consciousness' undergoes no maturation or wisdom, since it remains without interiority. Interiority presupposes limits, passivity, a kind of enclosed state, but 'there are no more barriers, no more limits, nothing to hide consciousness from itself' (*TE* 102/ 82). It is this dread, 'absolute and without remedy', this 'fear of itself' which reveals consciousness to itself in its purity. Sartre reinterprets the epoché as 'an anxiety which is imposed on us and which we cannot avoid' (*TE* 103/ 84). In his novel *La Nausée*, Sartre also gives precise descriptions of the absolute, irrepressible insistence of self-awareness. Consciousness is unable to get rid of itself. 'Et voici le sens de son existence: c'est qu'elle est conscience d'être de trop. Elle se dilue, elle s'éparpille, elle cherche à se perdre. . . . Mais elle ne s'oublie jamais: elle est conscience d'être une conscience qui s'oublie.'<sup>58</sup> In this radical obtrusiveness everything in the world strikes consciousness with an indomitable presence. Indeed, one might suggest that pure consciousness has something of a psychotic lack of enclosure.<sup>59</sup> Reality weighs heavily on consciousness and becomes choking and oppressive; all the reasons I projected onto it are dissolved in nothingness. I have no distance from it but cannot escape this lack of distance, for in order to itself, consciousness must have some content. It must be able to become as 'heavy and ponderable' (*TE* 42/ 26) as the consciousness of a self-complacent man who truly believes that he is someone whose intentional act reflects his deep opinions, convictions and desires.

More generally, consciousness has to get trapped by the contents and limits it has spontaneously produced. And this is precisely what Sartre affirms: consciousness itself constitutes its own limits (its unconscious) or its content (its passivity, its states, for instance) in order to mask itself from its own infinite, tireless spontaneity. In other words, consciousness degrades its own non-personal immanence into the personal intimacy of the psychic. It introduces passivity into its absolute spontaneity. This is precisely the role of the ego.<sup>60</sup> The ego is, as announced, the way in which consciousness 'constitutes a false representation of itself, as if consciousness hypnotized itself' (*TE* 101/ 82). The ego is itself only an object in that monstrous creation.

It always appears in a special act of reflection, which means a perversion of the normal unreflective self-transcendence. Sartre will claim tirelessly that since 'there is no I on the unreflected level' of consciousness, this I must be smuggled into consciousness by an act of reflection.<sup>61</sup> The intentional positional act is deflected from the object and directed back upon consciousness itself. For instance, when I revive a past act and try to apprehend the landscape I saw, I can also recollect that I was seeing it (*TE* 43/ 27). But this does not mean that the act before reflection already

presupposed the ego; on the contrary, it is precisely the reflective act which 'gives birth' to the ego. Sartre radicalizes Husserl's conviction that the unreflected thought undergoes a radical modification in becoming reflected upon. He does not confine that modification to the 'loss of a naïveté' (*TE* 46/30). Reflection infects consciousness with the ego. In the second part of *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Sartre gives a subtle and very condensed description of how consciousness, by the intrusion of self-reflective acts, constitutes a deeper self as a synthesis of states, qualities and activities. Sartre really wants to describe the genealogy of the Bergsonian kind of self, of a consciousness with a self-transcendence that emanates from an inner richness, a growing self-organization.<sup>62</sup> Consciousness introduces into itself a passivity out of which the acts emerge as the realization of possibilities and inclinations. 'It is thanks to the ego, indeed, that a distinction can be made between the possible and the real, between the appearance and being, between the willed and the undergone' (*TE* 101/ 82). This creates the illusion that there exists an affinity between my consciousness and the world I am related to. 'Everything happens as if the ego were protected by its phantom-like spontaneity from any direct contact with the outside, as if it could communicate with the World only by the intermediary of states and actions' (*TE* 83/ 65).

But, once more, this Bergsonian self cannot claim ownership of spontaneity. Rather, it is produced by spontaneity. This is why man always has the impression of 'ceaselessly escaping from himself, of overflowing himself, of being surprised by riches which are always unexpected' (*TE* 99/ 79). In this context, Sartre also refers to that 'famous sentence' by Rimbaud (in the letter to the seer): 'I is an other.' He comments on it as follows: 'The context proves that he simply meant that the spontaneity of consciousness could not emanate from the I, the spontaneity goes toward the I, it rejoins the I, lets the I be glimpsed beneath its limpid density, but it is itself given above all individuated and impersonal spontaneity' (*TE* 97-8/ 78).

This idea can also be expressed in a sentence Sartre writes in *Being and Nothingness* where he affirms that the ego is 'the "Me" of consciousness but not its own self'.<sup>63</sup> He means exactly that the self of consciousness is not the self of the ego, in other words that the spontaneity of consciousness transgresses egological freedom. 'The ego is not the owner of consciousness' (*TE* 97/ 77). Hence, the 'classic surprises: "I, I could do that. . . . I, I could hate my father!"' (*TE* 80/ 62). The linkage between the ego and its actions or states is based on a spontaneity that fundamentally exceeds my own freedom.<sup>64</sup> 'My emotions and my states, my ego itself, cease to be my exclusive property' (*TE* 94/ 75).

Does this not mean, very concretely, that consciousness produces its own 'unconsciousness'? Or that unconsciousness is not the reverse of consciousness, but is constituted by it, is a structural degradation of it? And hence, when man has 'the impression of ceaselessly escaping himself',

it will consequently be 'an unconscious from which he demands an account of this surpassing of the me by consciousness' (*TE* 99/ 79)? The unconscious is the trace of the absoluteness of a spontaneity that both makes possible inner duration and also ruthlessly overwhelms it. As Sartre will also claim in *L'imaginaire*, consciousness produces its unconscious in order to reaffirm its absolute, irreducible and non-relative nature.<sup>65</sup>

However, to repeat once more, everything happens as if Sartre wanted to 'deconstruct' a self as unifier.<sup>66</sup> He may reject it as useless and derived from a more absolute unity, but what about the identity of the self, what about the numerical identity of Husserl's 'reine Ich'?

The relation between Sartre and Husserl is a very complex one.<sup>67</sup> It is not certain how much Sartre had already read of Husserl at the time he wrote *TE*. As already suggested, the major input came from Bergson, and his knowledge of Husserl was partly motivated by Levinas' brilliant work,<sup>68</sup> which Sartre read with great interest.<sup>69</sup> As is often suggested, Sartre read Volume 1 of *Ideas* and other major works by Husserl only after 1936: and during that deeper reading, his original enthusiasm for Husserlian phenomenology changed. Sartre found in Husserl (as in Bergson) a way of thinking that could oppose idealism. Sartre strikingly shares Husserl's critique of the Kantian pure ego in the *Logical Investigations*<sup>70</sup> and regrets the idealistic turn made in Volume 1 of *Ideas*.<sup>71</sup> This notion of the transcendental I is not necessary. It doesn't add anything to the psychic and psycho-physical me (*TE* 36/18–19). But in order to claim this, Sartre has to reduce the role of the transcendental ego to that of a unifying principle. This means that Sartre reduced the *pure ego* to a more empirical one, because of an element in the former that he neglects in the latter. However, as Husserl stresses, for instance, in the *Cartesian Meditations* (§11), the transcendental ego has an irreducible aspect. And that irreducible aspect seems to be intimately linked with the development of the possibility of phenomenological reduction. It resists reduction.<sup>72</sup>

The difference between the two kinds of ego could be summarized as the ego as thing in the world, and the ego as the owner of a world. Sartre does not reject the idea that consciousness needs an ego in order to be related to a world, but he rejects the idea that the ego is necessary for the disclosure of consciousness to itself. The ego is not part of the structural unity of consciousness, and thus, as said before, the ego is never owner of his consciousness or of his world. But something escapes Sartre. The reality of the transcendental ego cannot be reduced to its idealistic role. Sartre is probably right to reject that idealistic background, but he seems to miss an aspect of that ego which he never stresses in his approach to the self: numerical identity.

Husserl's *pure ego* is a numerical identity, and, like Bergson, Sartre neglects the reality of this 'quantity' by resorting to a qualitative



determination of the self (self as the unity of qualities and states). Can identity only be thought of in relation to unity? In *Being and Nothingness*, identity means absolute unity, without self-presence. It is a limit. Identity is the pure *in-itself* ('en-soi'). And if unity is not identity, it is, as we have seen, because it does not coincide with its own origin; it is not the owner of its spontaneity. And the reason for that non-coincidence is the very nature of consciousness itself. But the 'pure ego' is more than simply the guarantee of the unity of consciousness. There is something proper to that *pure ego* which will not 'fall' before the stroke of the radical 'reduction' of Sartrean 'pure consciousness'. There is something more to that ego, something that claims and insists on an identity that remains indifferent to the unity of consciousness.

### 3 Husserl's 'Pure Ego'

Husserl, in Volume 2 of *Ideas*, makes the distinction between a 'pure' and a 'real' ego. The latter is 'constituted as transcendent object'.<sup>73</sup> It is the 'personal ego' which remains only *a posteriori* the same according to the unity of the consciousness in which it functions. The 'sameness' of this ego is the product of unity and of lived experience. It adapts itself to and evolves with the concrete totality of convictions, motives, habits and 'traits of character', because it *is* the unity of motives, judgments and states in which it dwells. But the relation between the *pure ego* and its inner experiences is not only a relation of *being*, but of *having*, of possession, *Habe* or *Zugehörigkeit*. The pure ego remains the owner of consciousness in spite of changes, since this 'reines Ich' is not reducible to the 'real ego', which is precisely Sartre's ego. Husserl stresses the fact that the pure ego has a kind of identity 'that does not only reside in the fact that the I (sc. the pure ego), with regard to each and every cogito, can grasp myself as the identical Ego of the cogito'.<sup>74</sup> I am '*a priori*' the same ego: my identity is prior to every constitution of the ego, of the 'concrete totality of inner experiences'. Consequently, the pure ego is immutable,<sup>75</sup> for its identity is not comparable to 'something that would first have to manifest and prove itself as identical by means of properties'.<sup>76</sup> It has no innate or acquired traits of character, capacities, dispositions, etc. It is transcendent to these determinations. However, this transcendence is not reducible to that of an object outside consciousness; it is, as we know, a 'transcendence *in immanence*'. In other words, it resists reduction. This reduction, we know, purifies appearances to their presence in immanence. The reduction is a 'suspension' and 'Ausschaltung' of the transcendent world. The question about the existence of the things is in brackets. This means precisely that from now on, the phenomena have to appear with a new urgency and insistence, with a presence that is no longer motivated any more by the doxic 'thesis' of their existence. The natural

'Einstellung' is interrupted and consciousness is purified to a 'transzendente Blickwendung'.<sup>77</sup> The phenomena appear unmotivated, and consequently, more insistent.

However, the pure ego resists this purification. It nevertheless 'appears' to consciousness, and precisely in this purified state. Here, Husserl explains that it 'does not appear or present itself from a side, does not manifest itself merely according to discrete determinations, aspects and moments'; in other words, it does not appear as a transcendent object. It is instead 'given in absolute selfhood and in unity which does not present itself by way of adumbrations'.<sup>78</sup> The reason for this immediacy, Husserl comments, is the fact that it 'is absolutely simple and it lies there absolutely clear'. It does not appear in a deep intimacy, as a source which would harbour inner richness. It reveals itself with a radical transparency, as something that neither has nor is a content, since it is absolutely 'einfach': 'not composed'. As a consequence, it is quite clear that the *pure ego* does not present itself in the way Sartre describes it. When it appears, it does so in a kind of 'presence' that cannot be eclipsed or adumbrated, and thus cannot be 'rediscovered'. It does not uncover itself through states and qualities; it is not 'partially' unconcealed. Its presence will never suffer any absence or distance. It is prior to presences of any kind and is not affected by them. It is, in other words, transcendent to its own immanence.

Husserl suggests this idea insofar as he claims that the pure ego is *atemporal*. Its identity persists and insists in spite of the changing unity of inner experiences. It transfixes inner temporality as something that remains in essence transcendent to it. 'Its identity is an identity throughout this immanent time'.<sup>79</sup> Although the I is no real moment in this or that conscious act, it endures with an insistence that by its very nature cannot be weighed down by the contents of the real moments. This insistent presence introduces a dissociation between identity and unity. The sameness of the identity is not dependent on the sameness of the inner flux. On the other hand, every real ego will always 'include' the 'pure Ego as its apperceptive nuclear content', as an identity that does not dissolve in the unity of the real flux and does not evolve with it.

It is precisely this insistence that disappears in Sartre's conception of the ego. Sartre cannot admit of any passivity in the spontaneity. And the only kind of passivity he can account for is that which is fraudulently and *a posteriori* introduced by reflection: it is the passivity with the opacity of an object, of a presence with adumbrations. Sartre's basic intuition remains that of a consciousness that always escapes the ego. Husserl seems instead to aim at a kind of consciousness that never succeeds in escaping an identity that it never constituted<sup>80</sup> and that refuses to coincide totally with its immanence.

One can try to illustrate the consequences of this conception by pointing to the fact that the pure ego remains '*constantly the same*, though in a

changing stream of lived experiences in which new motives are often constituted'.<sup>81</sup> This means, for instance, that my past opinions, although *I do not recognize myself in them*, will never appear to me as the opinions of a stranger, of the other, etc. Independently of the fact that I am or am not able to remember the real egological source of them, these past opinions belong undeniably to me. I cannot get rid of them since I cannot get rid of myself.

The *pure ego* transcends the qualitative determinations of its inner flux. It is tirelessly and unaffectedly the same, because it resists *a priori* every adaptation. The image of the pure ego is perhaps not that of an inhabitant, since it is detached and transcendent in its own immanence. However, it involuntarily possesses its immanent consciousness. That ego remains a kind of stranger within a consciousness it owns. Sartre, on the contrary, describes the ego as inhabiting a consciousness of which it is not the owner.

Husserl's ego, for this reason, remains the possessor of a past it cannot totally assume. In other words, one could think of a past (e.g., past wishes, convictions, etc.) that evokes a loss, but precisely not a loss of property in the Sartrean sense.<sup>82</sup> For the loss is experienced because of the insistence of an involuntary, *a priori* property before every kind of appropriation. Through this loss, the pure ego reclaims property, over and over again, as if *for the first time*. The identity remains one and the same, 'unum idemque', since it never arises or vanishes in the qualitative flux of lived experiences. And perhaps this iteration of '*for the first time*' is one of the meanings of the numerical character of the pure ego.

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### Notes

- 1 Sartre: 'It is ordinarily thought that the existence of a transcendental I may be justified by the need that consciousness has for unity and individuality.' *The Transcendence of the Ego*, translated and annotated by F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), p. 37/20 (the first number refers to the translation, and the second to the original. Henceforth, I use the abbreviation *TE*).
- 2 See below, and for the difference, see E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Vol. 2 trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer, 1989), pp. 102–27.
- 3 Sartre: 'L'identité, c'est le concept limite de l'unification' (in *L'Être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1934, p. 116). Henceforth '*EN*').
- 4 'The pure Ego is, to emphasize it expressly, numerically one and unique with respect to "its" stream of consciousness' (*Ideas*, Vol. 2, p. 117).
- 5 Exactly as Parfit reduces numerical identity to qualitative identity (in *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 202).
- 6 Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre, in P. A. Schilpp (ed) *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), p. 6.

- 7 *L'Imagination*, (Paris: PUF, 1948), p. 148.
- 8 To a great extent, Bergson's influence was eclipsed and mediated by the thoughts of the French personalists. In their critique of the psychological presentation of mind and person (compare the French associationists Taine and Ribot) they adopted the Bergsonian intuitions on the 'profound self' and duration. (For recent 'revival' of general interest in Bergson, see the journal *Philosophie* 54 (Paris: Minuit, 1997), or J. Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
- 9 E. Bréhier, *Transformation de la philosophie française* (Paris: Flammarion, 1950) p. 11.
- 10 Cf. R. Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 130ff.
- 11 For this relation with Kant, see A. Philonenko, *Bergson ou la philosophie comme science rigoureuse* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), pp. 21ff. (For a more general account of Bergson's r-theory of numbers, see Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 167–71).
- 12 'Welche eine Vorstellung ist, die sukzessive Addition von Einem zu Einem (gleichartigen) zusammenbefasst' (B182), *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn, Everyman's Library (London: Dent), p. 120.
- 13 Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, in: *Œuvres*, (henceforth *O*) (Paris: PUF, 1959). Translation: *Time and Free Will* (henceforth *TW*), trans. F. L. Pogson, Muirhead Library of Philosophy (London: Allen & Unwin, 1910; (8th edn, 1971).
- 14 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, o.c., p. 1, (O 5).
- 15 Some French neo-Kantian thinkers were very grateful to Bergson, and considered him one of their future hopes.
- 16 Bergson: 'It is this qualitative progress which we interpret as a change of magnitude, because we like simple thoughts and because our language is ill-suited to render the the subtleties of psychological analyses' (*TW* 13/O 13).
- 17 Bergson: 'But, just because we afterwards interpret this difference of quality in the sense of a difference of situation, it follows that we must have a clear idea of a homogeneous medium, i.e. of a simultaneity of terms which, although identical in quality, are yet distinct from one another' (*TW* 95/O 64).
- 18 However, concerning Bergson's strategy, Merleau-Ponty claims: 'Il n'est ni nécessaire, ni suffisant, pour revenir au temps authentique, de dénoncer la spatialisation du temps.' Merleau-Ponty will criticize Kant's conception of synthesis and substitute for it Husserl's model of 'fungierende Intentionalität'. This, according to Merleau-Ponty, articulates temporalization as such. The latter is a form of synthesis that is prior to the 'conscience thétique d'un objet', and which Merleau-Ponty associates with Heidegger's conception of transcendence (*Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 478). But Bergson's description of the inner process, of duration, inner self, etc., is exactly the hypothesis of a kind of synthesis that precedes every objectification.
- 19 Bergson, 'Le Possible et le réel', in *La Pensée et le mouvant*, O 1331–45.
- 20 Bergson: 'une organisation intime d'éléments, dont chacun est représentatif du tout, ne s'en distingue et ne s'en isole que pour une pensée capable d'abstraire' (O 68).
- 21 Bergson: 'à la fois identique et changeant' (O 68).
- 22 As Bergson was often accused of. See, for instance, F. Rauh, *La Conscience du devenir*, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 5 (1897), pp. 659–81; (1898), pp. 38–60.

- 23 Bergson: 'it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another' (*TW* 100/ *O* 67).
- 24 Cf. Sokolowski, *op .cit.*, pp. 134 ff.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- 26 Bergson: 'Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states' (*TW* 100/ *O* 68).
- 27 'Each of the so-called successive states of the external world exists alone; their multiplicity is real only for a consciousness that can first retain them and then set them side by side by externalizing them in relation to one another' (*TW* 120–1/ *O* 80).
- 28 *TW* 132/0 88.
- 29 This intuition was already familiar to Kant, who affirms, in his chapter on the schematism (concerning the schema for the category of substance): 'Die Zeit verläuft sich nicht, sondern in ihr verläuft sich das dasein des Wandelbaren' (B183).
- 30 Sokolowski, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- 31 V. Jankelevitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: PUF, 1931), 102. This comment is probably one of Sartre's inspirations for his description of the 'moi profond' in *Being and Nothingness* (*BN*), trans. H. E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 41 ff.
- 32 'These feelings, provided that they go deep enough, each make up the whole soul, since the whole content of the soul is reflected in each of them' (*TW* 165/ *O* 109).
- 33 Cf. G. Gusdorf: 'La réalisation du souverain bien personnel, dans la recherche d'un accomplissement de soi' (*Traité de l'existence morale* (Paris: A. Colin, 1949), p. 292).
- 34 Reiterating Bergson's definition: 'The ego, on the contrary, always appears at the horizon of states. Each state, each action is given incapable of being separated from the ego without abstraction' (*TE* 75/ 58).
- 35 'The ego is the creator of its states and sustains its qualities in existence by a sort of preserving spontaneity' (*TE* 78/ 61).
- 36 Because 'it would tear consciousness from itself; it would divide consciousness; it would slide into every consciousness like an opaque blade. The transcendental I is the death of consciousness' (*TE* 40/ 24).
- 37 Sartre: 'La conscience de quelque chose implique, nécessairement, sous peine de tomber dans l'inconscient, une conscience de soi', *Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi* (1947), p. 62. An intentional act without self-awareness would resemble the act of a sleepwalker.
- 38 Cf. his commentary on 'transversal intentionalities': 'Consciousness must be perpetual synthesis of past consciousness and present consciousness' (*TE* 39/ 22).
- 39 And this presence is not the present of an objective past. Otherwise, the act would be troubled or disturbed.
- 40 See also *BN*: 'Thus reflection has no kind of primacy over the consciousness reflected-on. It is not reflection which reveals the consciousness reflected-on. It is not reflection which reveals the consciousness reflected-on to itself. Quite the contrary, it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; there is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito' (p. liii).

- 41 Ibid., p. liii.
- 42 This has a very important consequence: there is no non-reflective self-consciousness of a non-intentional act. Or better: when the self-transcendence collapses, the self-consciousness itself collapses. It becomes overwhelmed by opaqueness, lack of transparency, because there is no act any more to be non-positionally aware of.
- 43 See *BN*, p. lii (*EN*, p. 19).
- 44 'All is therefore clear and lucid in consciousness: the object with its characteristic opacity is before consciousness, but consciousness is purely and simply consciousness of being conscious of that object' (*TE* 40/ 25).
- 45 *BN*, p. 172. Cf.: 'Consciousness is consciousness of something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness, that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself' (p. lxi) (which means that consciousness does not produce in itself that to which it is related).
- 46 'And consciousness is aware of itself *in so far as it is consciousness of a transcendent object*' (*TE* 40/ 24).
- 47 Where there are some motives or inclinations (contents), the spontaneous openness to things is broken. See Sartre, *Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: L'intentionnalité*, in *Situations*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 31–5.
- 48 Ibid., p. 34. (Cf. the example of 'Peter having to be helped', in *TE* 56/ 39).
- 49 Ibid., p. 32.
- 50 'All consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness of something. This means that there is no consciousness which is not positing of a transcendent object, or if you prefer, that consciousness has no "content"' (*BN*, p. li).
- 51 Ibid., p. lvi (*EN*, p. 23).
- 52 'This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness, but as *the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something*.' *BN*, p. liv (*EN*, p. 20).
- 53 Cf. *BN*, pp. 77–8: 'Presence is an immediate deterioration of coincidence, for it supposes separation.' But, as Sartre shows, it is *nothing* that is the source of that separation: 'But if we ask ourselves at this point *what is it* which separates the subject from himself, we are forced to admit that it is *nothing*. . . *The fissure then is the pure negative*' (*EN*, p. 120).
- 54 *BN*, p. 78 (*EN*, p. 120). What dissociates consciousness from itself is not disease, but exactly what constitutes consciousness as consciousness. Furthermore, a disease is bearable as something you can be, or must be, but you cannot be nothing.
- 55 Sartre: 'l'existence est sans mémoire' (*La Nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 169).
- 56 Sartre, *Vérité et existence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), p. 87.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 35 ff.
- 58 Sartre, *La Nausée*, p. 213.
- 59 'L'existence me pénètre de partout, par mes yeux, par le nez, par la bouche', *ibid.*, p. 161.
- 60 Consciousness needs an ego, because it is not only frightening an I; it is anguishing itself.
- 61 Sartre: 'The I never appears except on the occasions of reflective act' (*TE* 53/ 36).
- 62 *TE*, 60–93/ 44–74.
- 63 *BN*, p. 103 (*EN*, p. 148: 'le moi de la conscience, mais non son propre soi').

- 64 This also holds for 'free will': the ego and its will are surpassed by the pure non-personal spontaneity. The will can do nothing to it, and as Sartre illustrates, 'we are well aware of this in the occasional cases in which we try TO WILL a consciousness (I WILL fall asleep, I WILL no longer think about that)' (TE 99/ 79).
- 65 Cf. Sartre's descriptions of obsessions, in *L'Imaginaire*, (Paris: Gallimard (Folio), 1940; Reprinted 1986), pp. 241, 254, 298, 300–4.
- 66 'The ego appears to reflection as a transcendent object effecting the permanent synthesis of the psychic' (TE 71–2/ 55).
- 67 See the interesting and recent approach of J.-M. Mouillie, 'Sartre et Husserl: une alternative phénoménologique?', in *Sartre et la phénoménologie* (Paris: ENS Editions, 2000), pp. 77–132.
- 68 Levinas, *La Théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Alcan, 1930).
- 69 For these biographical notes, see A. Cohen-Solal, *Sartre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), pp. 181 ff.
- 70 Husserl: 'I must frankly confess, however, that I am quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary centre of relations' (*Logical Investigations*, V, §8, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970), Vol. 2, p. 550).
- 71 Sartre: 'After having determined . . . that the *me* is a synthetic and transcendent production of consciousness, he reverted in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* to the classic position of the transcendental I' (TE 37/20).
- 72 For the evolution of the role of the ego in Husserl's work, see E. Marbach, *Das Problem des Ich in der Phänomenologie Husserls*, *Phaenomenologica* 59 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).
- 73 Husserl, *Ideas*, Vol. 2, pp. 117–18.
- 74 *Ibid.*, pp. 118–19.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 Concerning this 'Reinigung des Bewusstseins' and the new way of 'Bewusstseinsweise', see *Ideas . . . , First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague/Boston/London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), pp. 131–47.
- 78 Husserl, *Ideas*, Vol. 2 p. 111.
- 79 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 80 'The pure Ego which becomes active here is not something introduced from the outside or added on' (*ibid.*, p. 115).
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 82 I.e., a sense according to which the ego never owned its states and qualities anyway.