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Intentionality, Consciousness, and the Ego: The Influence of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* on Sartre's Early Work

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ABSTRACT

Jean-Paul Sartre's early phenomenological texts reveal the complexity of his relationship to Edmund Husserl. Deeply indebted to phenomenology's method as well as its substance, Sartre nonetheless confronted Husserl's transcendental turn from *Ideas* onward. Although numerous studies have focused on Sartre's points of contention with Husserl, drawing attention to his departure from Husserlian phenomenology, scholars have rarely examined the way in which Sartre engaged and responded to the early Husserl, particularly to his discussions of intentionality, consciousness, and self in *Logical Investigations*. This essay focuses on Sartre's critical response to *Logical Investigations*, arguing that Husserl's understanding of these three notions shapes and informs Sartre's own approach to them in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936–37), "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology" (1939), and *Being and Nothingness* (1943). By carefully reading Sartre side by side with Husserl, this essay articulates the ways in which Sartre allowed himself to think along with, and not against, Husserl.

Introduction

Jean-Paul Sartre refers to the influence Edmund Husserl's phenomenology exerted on the development of his thinking on numerous occasions. In his philosophical texts, he often comments on Husserl's position regarding diverse topics such as emotions, time-consciousness, imagination, and one's relations to others. At times, Sartre builds on Husserl's accounts to support his own philosophical arguments; on other occasions, he articulates his own position in direct opposition to him. In his diaries and in numerous interviews and conversations now in print, Sartre reflects on his relationship to Husserl's work and recounts his first encounters with it.

Despite the wealth of these sources, few studies examine the concrete ways in which Husserl influences Sartre's work.[1] Recently, Beata Stawarska provided a much-needed account of Sartre's introduction to Husserl's phenomenology and a detailed and illuminating analysis of his relationship with it. Stawarska studies Sartre's early existential texts, where he

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enters into a conversation with Husserl's philosophical positions. Through an examination of Sartre's notion of intentionality, his applications of the phenomenological method, his critique of the transcendental ego, his philosophical investigation of human imagination, and his approach to human emotions, she outlines Sartre's ambivalence toward Husserlian phenomenology, suggesting that he is faithful to "the perceived spirit of phenomenology, but not to its word."[2] Indeed, though Sartre himself admits the effect Husserl's phenomenology had on him, saying on one occasion that "Husserl had gripped me... I was 'Husserlian' and long to remain so,"[3] he continuously tries to disentangle himself from Husserl's grasp. To mention only two well-known examples, in *The Transcendence of the Ego* Sartre criticizes Husserl's conception of the transcendental ego as incompatible with his (Husserl's) definition of consciousness, and thus his own interpretation of the ego as an object is held against Husserl's position. In *Being and Nothingness* he criticizes Husserl's account phenomenological experience of the other as incapable of escaping solipsism, despite the "undeniable advantages" of his theory. There, Sartre again opposes his own existential understanding of the self-other relationship to Husserl's epistemological view.[4]

Stawarska suggests that Sartre's paradoxical stance toward Husserl extends beyond methodological and doctrinal disagreements and is rooted in a crucial disagreement over fundamental philosophical commitments. As she puts it, the tension "touches on the problem, what are we, philosophers, to do?"[5] It is clear that the two differ on philosophy's ultimate task: Whereas Husserl thinks of phenomenology as "making possible a strictly scientific philosophy,"[6] Sartre conceives of it as "a philosophical foundation for an ethics and a politics."[7] For Husserl phenomenology is first and foremost a detached science, concerned with epistemic issues like clarity, evidence and truth: "Here we have a field of *attainable* discoveries, fundamentally involved in the possibility of a *scientific* philosophy. Such discoveries have indeed nothing dazzling about them: they lack any obviously useful relation to practice or the fulfillment of higher emotional needs" (1.172). According to Sartre, phenomenology's task is to investigate questions of existence, not of knowledge. Accordingly, *Being and Nothingness* is "An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology" in which Sartre does not apply the epoché. In exploring this crucial difference in their philosophical orientation, Stawarska limits her discussion to Sartre's response to Husserl's *Ideen* (1913). Consequently, she centers on the ways in which he labors to modify Husserlian phenomenology and redeem it from its transcendental overtones.[8] As she puts it:

> Sartre employs the phenomenological method adopted from Husserl to suspend the validity of the claims and concepts posited by Husserl; his loyalty is in the approach and not in the doctrine, and his goal is to purify the phenomenological field established by Husserl by clearing it of any mental furniture adopted from the philosophical tradition. … The promise of phenomenology is revolutionary, the fruit overly saturated with the usual juices of academic thinking; Sartre's goal is then to liberate Husserl from himself.[9]

However, alongside philosophical passages and personal statements that lend support to this reading, Sartre provides grounds for construing a different account of his relationship to Husserl's work. While reflecting on his relationship to Heidegger's philosophy, he admits his attraction to Husserl's scientific spirit and attempts to think through traditional philosophical problems:

> [T]he essential thing was certainly the revulsion I felt against assimilating that barbarous and so unscientific philosophy, after Husserl's brilliant, *scholarly* synthesis. With Heidegger, it seemed as though philosophy has relapsed into infancy. I no longer recognized the traditional

> problems in it—consciousness, knowledge, truth and error, perception, the body, realism and idealism, etc.[10]

Here, the exposition of traditional problems—touching directly on questions of knowledge and self-knowledge—are singled out to explain Husserl's strong appeal. Sartre also clearly indicates his admiration for the "academic" tone of Husserl's philosophy, as well as for his clarity and precision.

Although this and other autobiographical remarks cannot be the sole foundation for a reappraisal of Sartre's relationship to Husserl's work, and although they do not alter the fact that he manifests at times his discomfort with Husserl's philosophical positions, they may nevertheless enable us to envision a different narrative of Sartre's relationship to Husserl. In this alternative narrative Sartre is not "a parasitic reader of Husserl, who is leaching the available intellectual resources to the very bone and acknowledging the master's authority by repeatedly testing the validity of his claims."[11] Instead, he acknowledges the master's authority by allowing himself to think along with, and not against him.

In what follows, I will present an alternative, positive account of Husserl's influence on Sartre's philosophical development, by exploring their deep philosophical affinities. To this end, I will focus on the role Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900/1901; 1913/1921) played in shaping Sartre's approach to basic philosophical problems such as the nature of intentionality, consciousness, and the self. I will concentrate on two texts: *The Transcendence of the Ego* (published in 1936–37), and "Intentionality: A Fundamental Notion in Husserl's Phenomenology" (published in 1939, but written around the same time as the earlier work).

My alternative narrative is meant to supplement rather than supplant Stawarska's account of Sartre's relationship to Husserl's thought. She is right, of course, to point to Sartre's criticisms of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in *Ideas* and *Cartesian Meditations*, criticisms that appear in the very same texts in which I locate the positive influence of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. The point is that in as much as Sartre criticizes the late Husserl, he does it out of a position of allegiance to the early one. In this respect, I agree with her claim that "Sartre's goal is... to liberate Husserl from himself."[12] I want to emphasize that in liberating Husserl from himself, Sartre deems the liberated Husserl, the one who can return to his earlier self, as a crucial point of reference for his own philosophical project.

Intentionality: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Husserl refers to *Logical Investigations* as his "breakthrough-work" that inaugurates his phenomenological project (1.43), by abandoning his earlier attempt to provide a "psychological foundation" for logic and mathematics.[13] In the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891), where such a foundation was to be laid, Husserl argued that the act of grasping the meaning of logical or arithmetical truths is tantamount to having a psychological state. This was a form of psychologism whereby the clarification of concepts consisted in determining their psychological origin.[14] Yet, as Husserl describes it in the "Foreword" to the first edition of *Logical Investigations*, this position left "doubts of principle, as to how to reconcile the objectivity of mathematics, and of all science in general, with a psychological foundation for logic."[15] In other words, as long as the meanings that are grasped (e.g., logical or numerical concepts) are identified with psychological states, they remain subjective and lose their claim to objectivity. Nonetheless, if objectivity is to be maintained, Husserl argues, we are faced with the question of "[H]ow... to understand the fact that the intrinsic being of objectivity becomes

'presented,' 'apprehended' in knowledge, and so ends up by becoming subjective? What does it mean to say that the object has 'being-in-itself,' and is 'given' in knowledge?" (2.169). In other words, the question we face is what renders knowledge possible. How can we aim at something that possesses independent being without reducing it to a mental process?

Husserl's principle of intentionality provides an answer to this question. With it, he is able to distinguish between the thought processes or acts by which consciousness *intends* something and the objects that these processes or acts are about, which are *intended* by them. To develop a proper understanding of how it is possible to think of objectivity, Husserl insists that we need to rid ourselves of the Cartesian framework, according to which the mind is a substance that can only come into contact with its own ideas or mental contents. Instead, he continues, "we must go back to the 'things themselves'" (2.168).

The need to return to "the things themselves" is not a call to develop a metaphysics that deals with the being of the things in question. Rather, Husserl is concerned, first and foremost, with "*basic questions of epistemology*" (2.169). In other words, he is interested in studying the ways in which the things themselves are given to consciousness from a first-person perspective. His emphasis on the centrality of experience sheds light on his claim that a "theory of knowledge, properly described, is no theory" (2.178). Theoretical presuppositions about the nature of the mind determine what is available in experience. A Cartesian theory of mind, for example, limits the "things" that subjects can encounter and know to ideas or mental representations alone. If we want to establish a genuine theory of knowledge, we need to abandon theoretical considerations and return to seeing, thinking, judging, and knowing, and see what these very experiences yield, what is given in them, and what they refer to.

When we turn to experience, we are bound to discover that it is never purely subjective. Multiple experiences, actual and possible, are directed to objects and not to subjective contents contained in this or that mind. Objects as such can be seen differently by different subjects, or by the same subject at different moments in time. It is precisely the sameness and objectivity of "the things themselves" that render possible the multiplicity of experiences of them: "[T]he essence of meaning is... in its 'content', the single, self-identical intentional unity set over against the dispersed multiplicity of actual and possible experiences of speakers and thinkers" (2.228). Put differently, particular acts yield different points of views on one and the same thing. These acts, which are perspectival and singular, do not exhaust the object, which they are about. Objectivity, then, is irreducible to a particular point of view, yet it can only be given from a subjective point of view.[16]

Husserl's return to first-person experience and the givenness of things themselves in experience, is precisely what drew Sartre to his work. According to Sartre's own account, he was attracted to Husserlian phenomenology because of its ways of engaging with concrete experience: "That's why, when Aron said to me, 'Why, we can reason about this glass of beer ...'", says Sartre, "that knocked me out. I thought to myself: 'Now here at long last is a philosophy.'"[17] In "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," Sartre expresses his enthusiasm at Husserl's turn to the concrete, offering his reflections on the relationship between our experience of the world and the world itself. Sartre's account of intentionality in this essay is often understood as importing an ontological twist into Husserl's ontologically neutral principle.[18] If one focuses on Husserl's *Ideas*, where the epoché is exercised and the notion of *noema* (the object as intended qua intended) is introduced, it could indeed seem as though Sartre were imposing foreign ontological weight onto the notion of intentionality.

Yet, if our point of reference is Husserl's notion of intentionality in *Logical Investigations*, and if we keep in mind both the methodological considerations that motivate it and its conclusions, then we see that Sartre's reading is in fact attentive to Husserl's own view. For, as mentioned above, according to Husserl himself act-transcendent objects are necessary for the possibility of knowledge.

As is clear from Sartre's account in "Intentionality," the rejection of the Cartesian model of consciousness as a container for mental objects is a crucial step toward the construction of a viable philosophy. Sartre is disturbed by the prospects offered by traditional philosophy for thinkers wishing to understand the objectivity of the world: "The simplest and plainest among us vainly looked for something solid, something not just mental, but could encounter everywhere only a soft and very genteel mist: themselves." He bluntly calls this position, which makes the subject both the starting and end point of philosophizing, "illusion." Yet what is illusory about traditional philosophy is not simply its reduction of all knowledge to the subject, for, as Sartre says, illusion is "common to both realism and idealism."[19] Even realists, who think that the objects that we know are *not* mental entities, are caught in this illusion when they think that knowing entities is a psychological or mental state.[20] Thus illusion threatens realists and idealists alike, since it is rooted in a particular theory of mind and not in a certain ontological vision of the world. This theory of mind is none other than the Cartesian or representational theory that Husserl wants to dispel and that Sartre, in a more expressive manner, describes as a conception of consciousness as a "spidery mind," a "dark stomach," or "immanence."

Sartre thus identifies with the liberating force of Husserlian intentionality. First, as we saw, Husserl refuses to inherit a theory of knowledge that imposes certain structures or features on thinking. According to the Cartesian model, which in Sartre's account in "Intentionality," becomes a variant of "digestive philosophy," the mind can only know its mental contents, its own representations of the world. Husserl's insistence that experience itself shapes our theory liberates us from metaphysical presuppositions about consciousness. Consequently, as Sartre points out, "consciousness is purified." With this, we learn that in knowing, seeing, or thinking about X, consciousness does not know, see, or think about itself: "Husserl persistently affirmed that one cannot dissolve things in consciousness. You see this tree, to be sure. But you see it just where it is: at the side of the road, in the midst of the dust, alone and writhing in the heat, eight miles from the Mediterranean coast" (4–5).

With Husserl's introduction of the principle of intentionality in his *Logical Investigations*, we no longer know only mental states or "see" what appears before our mind's eye. We see and know things themselves. Again, Sartre builds here on what was already made explicit in *Logical Investigations*: "all thought and knowledge have as their aim *objects* or *states of affairs*, which they putatively 'hit' in the sense that the 'being-in-itself' of these objects and states is supposedly shown forth, and made an identifiable item, in a multitude of actual or possible meanings, or acts of thought" (1.169). And later in the Fifth Investigation he reiterates: "*the intentional object of a presentation is the same as its actual object, and on occasion as its external object, and... it is absurd to distinguish between them*" (2.595, original emphasis). On the basis of these and other remarks, Sartre insists that Husserl's notion of intentionality brings back to philosophy "something solid, something not just mental" (4). Intentionality, according to Sartre, forces us to take the world into our philosophical considerations. The particular worldly object on which Sartre focuses his philosophical attention is the ego. Despite the fact that his account of the objectivity of the ego draws

heavily on Husserl's own position in *Logical Investigations*, scant attention has been given to the similarity between their approaches to this issue. Before I turn to it, however, I examine how Husserl's understanding of the nature and structure of consciousness informs both Sartre's account of consciousness and his rejection of the notion of a transcendental ego.

Consciousness and the Ego

Sartre's early essay "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology" ends with the claim that Husserl's call to return to "the things themselves" has freed us from being held captive by a belief in the interiority of mind or soul, which prevented us from exploring the world at large. With Husserl, Sartre says, "We are... delivered from the 'internal life': in vain would we seek the caresses and fondling of our intimate selves, like Amiel, or like a child who kisses his own shoulder—for everything is finally outside: everything, even ourselves. Outside, in the world, among others" (5). In *The Transcendence of the Ego*, published before this essay, but written around the same time, Sartre elaborates on the latter point. The aim of the book, he declares in its very first page, is "to show … that 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."[21] The book itself develops as a response to the question "is the *I* that we encounter in our consciousness made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations, or is it the *I* which in fact unites the representations to each other?"[22] As the question makes clear, Sartre admits that the *I*, ego, or self is part of our experience, but he asks whether it is a condition for, or an outcome of, conscious experience. His answer is that consciousness makes the *I* possible and not the other way around.

Sartre argues in *The Transcendence of the Ego* that the ego or *I* is neither a formal condition for the unity of consciousness nor a constituent part of consciousness (existing materially in it). This is a radical position. Intuitively, we think of different conscious states, the different perceptions, thoughts, and desires that we experience, as emanating from our*selves*. In this respect the ego, self, or *I* seems to be the source of consciousness (understood most generally as the totality of experiences), and conscious activity seems to be an aspect of the ego. This is a rather commonsensical position, which assumes that a unified and unchanging self underlies the infinite changes that one undergoes through life. This self makes the young girl identical to the mature woman. Indeed, it grounds her very identity, despite the fact that the two may have very little—psychologically and physically—in common. This self can be understood either materially as a definite set of character traits, personality, motivations and drives, or formally, as a transcendental structure that supports conscious acts, gathering their multiplicity into one conscious stream. By addressing both philosophical variants of the intuitive notion that an ego, self, or *I* governs conscious life and is the source and end of actions, emotions, and thoughts, Sartre attempts to refute the idea that consciousness *belongs* to one's self and the ego is prior to consciousness.

Sartre articulates his own position vis-à-vis Kant's theory of the transcendental ego and Husserl's adaptation of this theory in *Ideas*. According to Kant, the 'I' is a formal subject-term that unifies all synthetic-conscious acts. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* the transcendental subject is not a substantial self but a function or an ability to synthesize experience, and hence a condition for the possibility of experience.[23] Kant distinguishes the transcendental ego from the empirical ego, the latter being the person's physical body and personality, the former being a formal principle.[24] Furthermore, Kant seems at times

to identify the transcendental self with the noumenal self, which is never given in experience.[25] Responding to Kant, Husserl rejects the notion of a transcendental ego in *Logical Investigations*, to which we shall soon return. However, later in *Ideas*, he postulates an ego as the source of intentional activity, and thus as the subject of consciousness. In the later work, Husserl says that the pure ego "belongs essentially to every cogito."[26] While Kant distinguishes between a transcendental and an empirical subject, Husserl does not think that two different selves exist, nor does he take the transcendental ego to be an abstraction from the empirical ego. Rather, he thinks of the transcendental self and the empirical self as two aspects of the same concrete ego.[27] Perhaps this is the reason why Sartre finds Husserl's position so problematic: Husserl "personifies" the conscious field, so that in any given act there is not only an activity (seeing, hearing, tasting) and an object (birds, rock concerts, ice cream) but also an ego—a "me" who watches, reads or hears.

Sartre rejects this view and argues instead that experience is at first selfless, consisting of conscious events that simply occur, not to "me" or to my "self" but to a pre-personal conscious field. The ego is not prior temporally or transcendentally to consciousness. It is transcendent, external to consciousness, an object *for* consciousness like any other object in the world: chairs, dogs, and other people. To prove this point, he examines a series of moments devoid of an ego, such as being absorbed in reading, or running after or away from something. The choice of examples seems to beg the question. In order to prove that consciousness is egoless, Sartre turns to experiences that do not involve an ego. However, the examples of conscious activities that are not mediated by an ego are meant to show that the ego is not necessary for consciousness. For if the ego were necessary, it would have had to appear as an actual component of every experience. It is therefore sufficient to show that there are experiences devoid of an *I*, in order to demonstrate the actual independence of consciousness from an ego.

With the elimination of the transcendental ego, however, one needs to find a different explanation for the unity and individuality of consciousness. According to Sartre, a conscious center of gravity is possible without recourse to an ego, and the cause of conscious unity and individuality does not lie outside consciousness (or behind it, using the language of Kant or of Husserl in *Ideas*). Sartre attributes the unity and individuality of consciousness to two of its fundamental features—intentionality and temporality.

Consciousness, says Sartre, does not require "any such unifying and individualizing *I*. Indeed, consciousness is defined by intentionality."[28] Returning to Husserl's claim in *Logical Investigations* that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something—"the fact that all thought and knowledge have as their aim *objects* or *states of affairs*" (1.169)—Sartre finds that the unity of consciousness is grounded in the objects which consciousness intends. At this point, he explicitly builds on Husserl's understanding of the intentional relationship between acts and objects. Recall that, according to Husserl, objects are not immanent to consciousness. He clearly indicates that regardless of the question of the existence or non-existence of the intended objects, these objects are external and can never be understood as psychic contents.[29] As we saw in the previous section, he insists that the intentional object is irreducible to the intending act. Thus he says, for example, that in any perceptual act "the object is not actually given, it is not given wholly and entirely as that which it itself is" (2.712). The object is given to perception in profiles, or, as he puts it in *Ideas*, it is revealed "through mere adumbrations."[30] Particular acts give different, restricted views of one and the same object. The object is not exhausted by the acts (by the perceptual acts of seeing

it at T1, T2, and so forth). On the contrary, the acts become what they are—that is, *acts of perceiving X*—by virtue of their being directed to one and the same object. This is what Husserl means when he says that the unity of the acts is not caused by any further act, but by "the thing itself, as a perceived unity" (2.789).

Sartre develops this line of reasoning when he says that intentionality, through its relation to objects, unifies consciousness.[31] Since the objects of experience are the same, consciousness is able to notice the repetition of acts by which it intends them. To use Sartre's example, the unity of acts of addition "by which I have added, do add, and shall add two and two to make four," is the transcendent object "two and two make four."[32] Furthermore, the identity of objects contributes to the experience of temporal continuity. It enables consciousness to consider a current act as a variation or continuation of former ones. For example, "seeing the apple tree" at t^1 is considered the same kind of act as "seeing the apple tree" at t^n, precisely because it is a seeing of one and the same thing—the apple tree.

However, Sartre continues to note that something else is needed "if the continual flux of consciousness is to be capable of positing transcendent objects outside the flux."[33] The experience of objects as different or the same requires an awareness of their sameness or difference. In other words, to realize that something is "self-identical" or "the same" means to see it as the same *as it was*. One needs to remember past experiences and integrate them into present acts in order for conscious experience to emerge as a unified whole. Without the ability to retain prior perceptions and relate them to present ones, consciousness would not have been able to realize that the object perceived now *is the same* as the object perceived yesterday. So a minimal capacity for retention is required for consciousness to be unified.

In addition, consciousness must be able to retain not only the object phase (be conscious that what it perceives now is the same as what it perceived yesterday) but also the act phase (retain the past act by which *it* intended the object, so that it can judge now that *it* grasps the same object). Consciousness needs to be able to grasp *itself* as the same consciousness both now and yesterday. Unless it grasps itself as the same consciousness, it cannot issue judgments about the objects present to it. Consequently, the unity of objects that seemed at first to grant consciousness its unity depends, in fact, on a second kind of unity: the unity of consciousness as a self-aware whole.

The idea of a self-temporalizing consciousness is introduced in *Logical Investigations* with Husserl's short discussion of the "presentative form of *time* which is immanent in the stream of consciousness." About this form of time, immanent in consciousness, he says that "in each actual phase of the stream of consciousness the *whole* time-horizon of the stream is presented, and it thereby possesses a form overreaching all its contents, which remains the same continuously, though its content steadily alters" (2.545). In other words, each act appears in light of a horizon of that-which-has-just-appeared as well as of that-which-will-appear. And since through the integration into this pattern one stream of consciousness is created, we find that this structure of temporalization constitutes a unity within diversity. Despite the fact that the acts continuously change ("its content steadily alters"), consciousness remains the same ("possesses a form overreaching all its contents").

It is clear that Sartre's position regarding the individuality and unity of consciousness and the gratuitousness of all transcendental support is influenced by Husserl's own approach to consciousness in *Logical Investigations*. Sartre himself admits that his thinking on the matter is in complete unison with Husserl's. In answering the question whether "one [need] double it [consciousness] with a transcendental *I*" in the negative, he mentions that Husserl too

has given this reply: "After having determined that the *me* is a synthetic and transcendent production of consciousness, he reverted... to the classic position of a transcendental *I*." Yet Sartre continues to ask in a somewhat disappointed voice: "Was this notion necessary"?[34] Sartre's presentation of the development in Husserl's thought on the question of the ego reveals his desire to bring Husserl back to his former line of thinking. He takes his own work as a revival of Husserl's original response to the crucial question of the necessity of the transcendental 'I', a question to which he responded in the negative, given his understanding of the ability of consciousness to unify and individualize itself. Yet despite the fact that he later retracts his position, Husserl does not omit his account of the egoless nature of consciousness from the subsequent editions of *Logical Investigations*. However, in a footnote he adds that "the opposition to the doctrine of a 'pure' ego, already expressed in this paragraph, is one that the author no longer approves of, as is plain from his *Ideas* cited above" (2.542, n. 1). And after having said in Section 8, in response to Paul Natorp's discussion of the pure ego, "I must frankly confess, however, that I am quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary center or relations," he adds, in a note, "I have since managed to find it, i.e. have learnt not to be led astray from a pure grasp of the given through corrupt forms of ego metaphysics" (2.549). Whereas in the body of the work he maintains that consciousness is a unified whole, an identical "interconnected unity" (2.541), he nevertheless qualifies this claim later in the notes, arguing that the stream of consciousness depends on the existence of a pure ego.

In one of these footnotes (in section 6), Husserl explains what led him to modify his earlier position. The empirical ego, which he identified in the first edition of *Logical Investigations* with the stream of consciousness, is a transcendent thing that "falls" or is suspended with the phenomenological reduction. Yet the reduction does not eliminate the evidence of the *I am*. Even after the psychological or empirical ego has been bracketed, all conscious acts are experienced as emerging from a conscious center. And it is by virtue of emanating from this center and referring back to it that they are part of one conscious stream, a stream that is *mine*. As he puts it in *Ideas*, "[e]very '*cogito*', every act in a specially marked sense, is characterized as an act of the Ego, 'proceeding from the ego', 'actually living' in it."[35] With this, consciousness becomes egological; it possesses an ego as a center of gravity of any possible intentional act. Itself not appearing as an object of these acts, the transcendental ego is nonetheless living each of these acts. In Husserl's own words:

> In every actual *cogito* it [i.e. the pure ego] lives out its life in a special sense, but all experiences also with the mental background belong to it and it to them, and all of them, as belonging to *one* single stream of experience, that, namely, which is mine, *must* permit of being transformed into actual *cogitations* or of being inwardly absorbed into such; in the words of Kant, "The '*I think*' *must be able to accompany all my presentations*."[36]

Kant's claim about the "I think," which Husserl uses to lend support to his own notion of a transcendental ego, is also Sartre's starting point for the rejection of any transcendental ground for consciousness in *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Sartre agrees that the "I think" must *be able* to accompany all my presentations, if they are indeed to be *mine*. He nonetheless thinks that it is wrong to pass from claims about its possible ability to claims about its actual presence. The "I think" is necessary for the personification of consciousness. However, according to Sartre, consciousness is not first and foremost personified. We have seen that in *The Transcendence of the Ego* Sartre adopts Husserl's notion of consciousness and sees it as the foundation for all experience. Following the early Husserl, he maintains that as long

as we live in our acts we do not encounter an *I*. We are directed to the objects intended by these acts. It is not *I* who is thinking, but simply a pre-personal, anonymous consciousness intending objects through various acts. Sartre says, "[w]hen I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*."[37] With this, he reiterates Husserl's point in *Logical Investigations*: "if we simply 'live' in the act... become absorbed, e.g., in the perceptual 'taking in' of some event happening before us, in some play of fancy, in reading a story, in carrying out a mathematic proof etc., the ego... becomes quite elusive" (2.561).

Husserl's emphasis on the manner in which we live in the act is crucial for Sartre, who wishes to capture the immediacy and intimacy of our relation to the world in his philosophical thinking. If we take *Logical Investigations* as a starting point for Sartre's discussion of the relationship between consciousness and the ego, we can come to understand his dismissal of Husserl's later discovery, reported in the famous footnote to section 8. The ego is to consciousness as the footnote is to the text: both are added retrospectively and with their addition what was originally present is radically changed. Husserl, reflecting on his earlier work, was able to find an "ego" where he originally saw none. According to Sartre, this is not accidental, since the ego is indeed revealed only in hindsight. Moreover, after living in reflection long enough, living in the "shadow" of the ego, so to speak, consciousness becomes tainted by its presence, for it acquires a semblance of a personified conscious field. Contra the late Husserl, who argues that "the ego belongs to each coming and going mental process" and that in each act "the ego lives out its life in a special sense,"[38] Sartre insists that while living in our acts we are in the presence of things, absorbed in them to such a degree that precludes the existence of an ego on that level. The attentiveness to objects enables us to live in what Alfred Schutz termed "the vivid present."[39] This is a spacious present in which consciousness dwells, or which it, in fact, is.[40]

Both Husserl and Sartre connect the appearance of the ego with a withdrawal from the absorption in the world and with a fundamental change in the temporal structure of consciousness. The appearance of the ego is an outcome of the re-direction of the conscious gaze. When we reflect on our immediate experience, says Husserl, "[t]he original act is no longer simply there, we no longer live in it, but we *attend to it and pass judgment on it*." Reflection brings a specific past moment to the forefront and halts the flow of the vivid present. Both Sartre and Husserl identify reflection with a radical change in consciousness. According to Husserl, with reflection "an essential descriptive change has occurred" (2.562), and according to Sartre, "the consciousness which says *I think* is precisely not the consciousness which thinks."[41]

Conclusion: Consciousness and Freedom

There are, no doubt, further affinities between Husserl and Sartre, beyond those I have examined regarding intentionality, consciousness, and the self. Some are explicit, such as their approach to the question of imagination and image, and their interpretation of self-awareness; some are implicit and require careful exegesis of their work, such as their understanding of the self-other relationship. The scope of this essay does not allow me to examine all these issues. I hope to have shown, however, that Husserl's early work shapes and informs Sartre's own philosophical agenda in the most concrete ways. I read these texts chronologically in order to highlight the ways in which specific themes from

Husserl's *Logical Investigations* can be traced through Sartre's *Transcendence of the Ego* and "Intentionality." In this respect, my reading uncovers Husserl's "footprints" in Sartre's work. Yet now I would like, by way of a conclusion, to reverse the order of the reading. Beginning with Sartre's notion of consciousness in *Being and Nothingness* and his emphasis on the relationship between consciousness and freedom, I wish to trace him back to Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and thus to highlight a vein in Husserl's own thinking that is not fully explicit. This is not meant to impose Sartrean concepts on Husserl's work, but rather to articulate and explicate certain strains in it that, I think, form the horizon upon which Sartre's own understanding of philosophy's genuine concerns is shaped and articulated.

As we saw, Sartre's reading of Husserl in "Intentionality" and in *The Transcendence of the Ego* emphasizes that Husserlian phenomenology culminates in the purification of the conscious field. Consciousness is cleared not only of mental residue but also of the ego. The elimination of selfhood in both its transcendental and material form, argues Sartre, allows us to see that consciousness has direct contact with the world. Indeed, according to Sartre's reading Husserlian phenomenology understands consciousness as nothing other than a relation to the world.

This line of thinking is further developed in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). In this later work Sartre turns to the question of the being of consciousness and no longer offers a purely descriptive science of consciousness. Yet even that work begins with a reference to Husserl's principle of intentionality.[42] Consciousness's relation of 'aboutness', its directedness to objects, reveals, according to Sartre, that consciousness itself is not an object; it is not a thing, or it is *no*thing, in the sense that there is nothing substantial in it. For in order for it to be conscious of something, consciousness must be conscious of itself (self-conscious, that is) as other than that thing. The intelligibility of experience hinges on consciousness's ability "to withdraw itself from the full world of which it is consciousness and to leave the level of being in order frankly to approach that of non-being."[43] By virtue of its ability to withdraw from the plenum of being, consciousness is identified with nihilation and, consequently, with freedom. Consciousness is *no*thing; that is, it is not a thing, but rather a negating movement that creates distance between itself and the world, allowing for a world to appear in the first place. For Sartre, consciousness is free since it is a not a thing. Rather, it is a non-being or a relation to things, which makes every "this" or "that" appear. Consciousness's nothingness, its freedom, is the "original condition of the questioning attitude and more generally of all philosophical and scientific inquiry."[44] Thus questioning and reflecting are only possible because consciousness is free. The possibility of assuming a perspective on things, which is necessary for understanding both itself and the world, is grounded in consciousness's lack of self-identity. Our ability to question both grounds and reveals our transcendence and our freedom: we question because we are not identical to the world, to others, or to ourselves. We question too because we are always able to make our relationship to things explicit, to reflect on this relationship, and to know that "it is thus and not otherwise."[45]

This very idea of the interconnectedness of freedom, reflection, and knowledge seems to underlie Husserl's project in *Logical Investigations*. In the introduction to the first volume, Husserl elaborates on the fundamental role of reflection in the phenomenological project:

> The source of all such difficulties (whether we aim at pure essence of experiences or treat experiences from an empirical, psychological standpoint) lies in the unnatural direction of intuition and thought which phenomenological analysis requires. Instead of becoming lost in the performance of acts built intricately on one another… we must rather practice 'reflection',

> i.e. make these acts themselves, and their immanent meaning-content, our objects. … Here we have a direction of thought running counter to deeply ingrained habits which have been steadily strengthened since the dawn of mental development. (1.170)

Without going into the details of Husserl's notion of reflection, which is not monolithic, I want to suggest that for Husserl, just as for Sartre, reflection, and, indeed, the possibility of philosophical knowledge more generally, is intimately linked with freedom. Husserl presents the phenomenological project in this passage as dependent on the possibility of reflection. Ordinary thinking, and perhaps even some forms of scientific thinking, are habitual and hence feel natural, but they distort our understanding of experience. Only by uprooting thought from its attachment to habits of thinking can we gain a clear grasp of our experience. Reflection reorients thought. By repositioning thought, distancing it from all that is familiar and natural, one is able to open up to new possibilities for understanding. Here, Husserl connects reflection with freedom, for he tells us that the former allows consciousness to resist even "deeply ingrained habits." In other words, consciousness is not merely conditioned; rather, it can always reflect on the conditions in which it finds itself, distance itself from them, and question its own situation.

Husserl's *Logical Investigations* provided Sartre with a set of problems that he explored as his own philosophical project—from the structure of consciousness and its relationship to the world, to the peculiar being of the self. In this project we also find, albeit in an implicit and restrained way, at least in the early stage, a sentiment that Sartre later makes explicit, namely, that through its relentless efforts to understand itself and the world, consciousness expresses its own freedom. Freedom, manifested most clearly in reflection and questioning, makes possible philosophical thinking itself and opens the door to understanding the human condition.

Notes

1. Most studies examine specific points of conflict or disagreement between Sartre and Husserl. For instance, their different understanding of the nature of selfhood, otherness, memory, and imagination. Dealing with these disagreements, scholars either try to rehabilitate Husserl's position and defend it from Sartre's criticism, or develop Sartre's critique. Examples of the former approach are Beata Stawarska, "Memory and Subjectivity: Sartre in Dialogue with Husserl," *Sartre Studies International* 8 (2002): 94–111; Beata Stawarska, "Defining Imagination: Sartre between Husserl and Janet," *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*s 4 (2005): 133–53. The latter approach is taken by Alfred Schuetz in "Sartre's Theory of the Alter-Ego," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9 (1948): 181–99; and Dan Zahavi, "Intersubjectivity in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*," *Alter* 10 (2002): 265–81.
2. Beata Stawarska, "Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*: Phenomenology and Imagination," in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key Concepts*, ed. Steven Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham, NC: Acuman, 2013), 12.
3. Jean-Paul Sartre, *War Diaries*, trans. Quintin Hoare (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 183.
4. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 317.
5. Stawarska, "Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*," 13.
6. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. John Niemeyer Findlay, ed. Dermot Moran (London: Routledge, 2001), 4; hereafter cited in the text.
7. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Hill & Wang, 1960), 106.

8. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick express a similar position in their introduction to *The Transcendence of the Ego*. They focus on "what is under attack by referring to the philosophy of Husserl... to suggest how this disagreement with Husserl seems to have facilitated the transition from phenomenology to the existentialist doctrines of *L'Etre et le Neant*." Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 12.
9. Stawarska, "Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*," 17–18.
10. Sartre, *War Diaries*, 183.
11. Stawarska, "Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*," 17.
12. Stawarska, "Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*," 18.
13. For a comprehensive account of the itinerary of Husserl's thought, see Jitendra Mohanty, "The Development of Husserl's Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 45–77.
14. In the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* Husserl claims that his aim is "at a psychological characterization of the phenomena on which the abstraction of that concept rests." Edmund Husserl, *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, trans. Dallas Willard (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003), 22.
15. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, trans. John Niemeyer Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970), 2; hereafter cited in the text.
16. For a detailed account of the distinction between real and ideal and Husserl's rejection of the mentalistic framework, see Lillian Alweiss, "Between Internalism and Externalism: Husserl's Account of Intentionality," *Inquiry* 52 (2009): 53–78.
17. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), 26.
18. Stawarska, for instance, refers to "Sartre's decidedly realist reading of intentionality," in "Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*," 21. According to her, Sartre picks up undercurrents in Husserl's *Ideas*, which he then weaves into "the cloth of his own ontology" (Ibid.) As I hope to show, though Sartre certainly radicalizes Husserl's understanding of intentionality, he is articulating a line of thinking that appears in an explicit manner in *Logical Investigations*, according to which the objects of consciousness are irreducible to the acts by which consciousness intends these very objects.
19. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," trans. Joseph Fell, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1 (1970): 4; hereafter cited in the text.
20. This is exactly what realists think, according to Sartre: "Is not the table the actual content of my perception? Is not my perception the present state of my consciousness?" ("Intentionality," 4).
21. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 31.
22. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 34.
23. Sartre offers an interesting reading of Kant. According to Sartre's revisionary account, from the fact that the "I think" must be able to accompany all our representations, it does not follow that it does in fact always accompany them. Kant is asking a question of possibility says Sartre, not a question of fact.
24. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), A 106–7, 232.
25. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 492/B 520, where "the transcendental subject" is equated with "the self proper, as it exists in itself." As a noumenal object, the transcendental self is not subject to any of the categories and cannot be said to be in space or time. At the same time, it cannot be said to be a self in any sense. Insofar as it is a condition for all experience, not just mine or yours, the transcendental ego has no particularities.
26. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982), 261.
27. Husserl returns to this point in his *Encyclopedia Britannica* essay on phenomenology, where he says: "Transcendental subjectivity... is none other than again 'I myself'... not, however, as found in the natural attitude of every-day or of positive science; i.e., apperceived as components of the objectively present world before us, both rather as subjects of conscious life, *in* which this world and all that is present – for 'us' – constitutes itself through certain apperceptions."

"'Phenomenology' Edmund Husserl's Article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1927): New Complete Translation by Richard E. Palmer," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 2 (1971): 85. For an interpretation of the transcendental self as the ordinary self under a change of aspect, see David Carr, "Kant, Husserl, and the Nonempirical Ego," *The Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1977): 682–90. For the alternative reading, see Herbert Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 57 (1960): 62–74.

28. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 38.
29. Commenting on Franz Brentano's notion of intentionality, where "every psychical phenomenon is an object of inner consciousness," Husserl says that Brentano's "grave misgivings... keep us from assenting to this" (*Logical Investigations*, 2.557). He also explicitly argues that "[H]owever we may decide the question of the existence or non-existence of phenomenal external things, we cannot doubt that the reality of each such perceived thing cannot be understood as the reality of a perceived complex of sensations in a perceiving consciousness" (2.862).
30. Husserl, *Ideas*, 91.
31. "By intentionality consciousness transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself." Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 38.
32. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 38. This example is also interesting since it shows that Sartre accepts ideal entities as examples of external entities, just as Husserl does. When Sartre says that number is a "transcendent object," he obviously does not mean that it exists in the world.
33. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 38–39.
34. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 37.
35. Husserl, *Ideas*, 232.
36. Husserl, *Ideas*, 172–73.
37. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 49.
38. Husserl, *Ideas*, 132.
39. Alfred Schutz, "Sheler's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the General Thesis of the Alter Ego," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 2 (1942): 342.
40. This is what Husserl calls a "phenomenological stream of consciousness" (*Logical Investigations*, 2.541).
41. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 45.
42. "All consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness *of* something." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 11.
43. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 560.
44. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 44.
45. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 36.