



# Situating Sartre's Phenomenological Method of Intentionality: A Critical Study

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**Abstract:** *The paper will analyse Sartre's phenomenological method, focusing on the role of "intentionality" of consciousness at the phenomenological level. At the phenomenological level, intentionality pre-supposes that a person does believe in the consciousness of his mind, that what it perceives or understands is real or true. Modern western phenomenologists use "intentionality" as a technical term which often lends the impressi on of vagueness and opacity; yet it still carries meanings recognizable to general readers. Without reviewing the whole history of the emergence of the term "intentionality," firstly the study will deal with the idea initiated and propounded by Husserl. Here, the paper will focus on the idea of intentionality as understood by the phenomenologists in contemporary time, which can be traced to Edmund Husserl, the renowned phenomenologist. Husserl can be considered the founder of modern phenomenological movement in Europe during the twentieth century. His enunciation of the key-concept of intentionality plays a central role in the entire process of phenomenological methodology. Here, an attempt is made to first show how Husserl developed the notion of intentionality. This will be an attempt to give complete account of Husserl's phenomenological method of intentionality. Further, it will analyse a comparison of Husserl's concept of ego and that of Sartre will be taken up. A comparison is made between Husserl's concept of ego, and Sartre's view of the same, in order to find their implications relating to phenomenological approaches or methodology. Sartre's phenomenological method of intentionality seems to suggest an initial relation between consciousness and belief. It is required to clarify the connection between them. As of fact, Sartre conceived his thesis on consciousness by critically examining Husserl's assertions on the nature of consciousness. Sartre criticized Husserl's concept of the transcendental ego, his notion of transcendental perception and immanent perception—the two kinds of consciousness according to their different norms of givenness. Apart from these critiques, the researcher will look into Sartre's pre-reflective cogito which he claims as the primary consciousness. Further, the researcher will analyze how for-itself or human reality has the power for individual projection.*

**Key words:** *Intentionality, Consciousness, Irreflexive, Transcendent, Immanent, Positional, Non-Positional, Reflective, Pre-reflective, Ekstasis, For-itself, In-itself and Projection.*

**Introduction:** The notion of “intentionality” originally was introduced by Franz Brentano. Husserl, as his student in Vienna, got this concept from him. In his works *Logical Investigations* and *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl elucidates that intentionality is the property of consciousness by virtue of which a subject’s mental state is directed at, or is about, something other than itself. Intentionality, which is derived from the Latin word “interdere” which means “to point out” or “to aim at,” was put forth by the nineteenth century philosopher and Husserl’s teacher Franz Brentano.<sup>i</sup> Sartre’s intellectual activity on consciousness developed from Husserl’s ideas of intentionality, as seen clearly from his writing *The Transcendence of the Ego*. So, Sartre having subscribed to the phenomenological school enunciated by the German thinker Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), began to build his own philosophy of consciousness. From the writings produced in the wake of his philosophical conceptions, it becomes clear that, among other ideas, Sartre fully employed Husserl’s principle of intentionality in making advances in his theorization on consciousness. He effectively brought to light his insights concerning the pre-reflective and the reflective types of consciousness, and more interestingly, the positional and non-positional sides of consciousness.

**Husserl’s ideas of Intentionality:** According to Husserl, in his work *Logical Investigations*, consciousness possesses intentionality because consciousness is always consciousness of something, about a thing or towards an object. Here Husserl’s object of intentionality refers to an entity or non-entity, such as an idea or illusion. Furthermore, for Husserl, intentionality refers to a mental state or act that is characterized in its being conscious of or about something. The questions which arise are: what are you thinking of? What are you thinking about? etc. Intentionality is the about-ness or directedness of the mind (or state of mind) and this kind of directedness, about-ness, of-ness, lies in its capacity to relate thought or experience to objects.<sup>ii</sup> As we know, Husserl’s focus is not on objects or things in themselves, but concentrates on the characteristics of intentionality of the mind and the contents of its phenomenological experiences.

Husserl’s theory of intentionality can be expressed as “every act of consciousness is always consciousness of something.”<sup>iii</sup> A person is never just conscious; one is always conscious of something. In other words, one’s consciousness is never empty or void, i.e. object-less. One never just perceives; one always perceives something—whether it’s real or not, it doesn’t make any qualitative difference phenomenologically. One never just imagines; one always imagines something. One never just fears, there’s always an object of fear—an entity or event or situation one dreads. In this regard, in every act of consciousness, it “directs its attention,” “points toward,” and connects with—and in that sense “intends” (tends toward)—an object.<sup>iv</sup> Thus intentionality pictures the connectedness of the mind and the object of which the mind is conscious or paying attention to.

Firstly, in Husserl's theory of intentionality, introduced in his work *Logical Investigations*, Husserl posits that the relation of intentionality is *irreflexive*. This would mean that in *no* act of consciousness, the consciousness is able to instantaneously reflect on that act. In other words, consciousness can not at the same time direct its attention on that very act of directing its attention on an object. When I perceive a book, I know the book is the object of my consciousness.<sup>v</sup> My perceiving of the book is not the object of consciousness; obviously it is the book which is the object of my intentionality. Of course, subsequently or later, I can always reflect or think about my perception of the book. Thus, my perception becomes an object of intentionality in another act of consciousness. In like manner, Husserl illustrates this *irreflexive* principle of intentionality by using a common movie-theater model. If I am "caught up" in the movie, I'm thinking about the events in the story. I'm not thinking about my watching the movie. In fact, if I do stop to think about my watching the movie, to that extent I have to "pull myself out" of the movie. There is an almost physical sense of pulling myself out of the one type of consciousness and putting myself into the other kind. So, we can say that the relation of consciousness to its object is an *irreflexive* one. This *irreflexivity* of intentionality clearly indicates that in a given moment the mind's consciousness is engaged or directed to *one* object, and not more.

At this point, it may be noted that *irreflexivity* of consciousness is not necessary to be confused with reflective consciousness. For, in the later, one act of consciousness of the past becomes the object of a subsequent act of consciousness. In other words, one says that the mind is reflecting on a mental act of the past. In this reflective act, one can see the operation of the same principle of *irreflexivity* i.e. only one object of consciousness in a given moment. Thus, reflective thinking does not violate the mind's *irreflexive* principle. Logically, after all, it is not possible for an act of consciousness to be reflexive in the sense of taking itself as its object. However, in his subsequent work *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl himself appears to be not altogether of one mind on this claim of "*irreflexivity*." Surprisingly, he claims that every mental process, while being enacted, can be reflected on.<sup>vi</sup> If this means we simply have *two acts at once*, the one reflecting on the other, this clearly runs contrary to the aforementioned principle that the relation of intentionality is *irreflexive*. Perhaps, he seems to take into account the flexibility of the mind to switch its attention from one object to another object of consciousness. In this particular case, the mind would alternate its attention from an object of consciousness to that act of consciousness; in other words, the mind is alternately reflecting on an ongoing act of consciousness. This is so, even as a previous act of consciousness can become the object of consciousness in the next act of consciousness. Therefore, one may construe that the mind may be reflexive enough to change its object of intentionality in quick succession, all along obeying the law of *irreflexivity* of the intentionality of consciousness.

Secondly, Husserl claims in his thesis of intentionality that "the object of an act of consciousness is transcendent to that act," i.e. the object is not mind-dependent, partly or wholly contained or confined to that one act of consciousness.<sup>vii</sup> So the object of intentionality is genuinely transcendent to consciousness and its acts. Closely following Husserl's theoretical deliberations that led to eidetic abstraction (reduction), those

objects of intentionality and contents of phenomena comprise things in themselves (entities) and universals (thinking, sensing, feeling, imagining, recollecting, hallucinating—mental acts, states, or processes; and the qualities of concrete or in existence things). In eidetic reduction, a thought or *cogitatio* which is a particular experience of an individual consciousness (i.e. phenomenon) is dissected in terms of the essence of its components.<sup>viii</sup> And essences are described in terms of universals. Universals are so called because they can be enacted or experienced repeatedly by not only the same individual, but by other individual in general. Hence universals are not exhausted in one single act of consciousness or phenomenon, and are not therefore strictly mind-dependent or mental content. They are therefore genuinely transcendent. When a consciousness enact or experience a universal or universals, the transcendent becomes immanent.<sup>ix</sup>

Thirdly, Husserl's one main reason for postulating sense-data(mental contents) as objects of consciousness is to account for illusions.<sup>x</sup> If what I'm seeing is a "bent" oar—the object of my consciousness—then the object is illusory: it obviously isn't "out there." Is it therefore happening "all in my mind"? If the "bent" oar isn't really "out there," then is it by necessity "in my mind"? Husserl does not think so; he says that's a mistake. When I see the "bent" oar, it is the oar I see, and oars are not the kinds of things one can put inside a mind or consciousness. Oars are concrete objects—matter-stuff, not mind-stuff. So, Husserl just accepts the inevitable result of this. If the "bent" oar doesn't really exist "out there," as real oars are straight, then it doesn't exist at all, whether in the mind or outside it. It in no way follows that it does really exist "in my mind"—as if we have to find some place for it to exist! This case is to instantiate that an intentional object needs not exist. I can imagine all kinds of things that don't exist; I can think of things that don't exist, I can certainly fear things that don't exist. All of these are cases of being conscious of things that don't exist.

On the contrary, Husserl expounds on the occurrence the fallacy of inference as such: I am conscious of p; therefore, p exists.<sup>xi</sup> It is this tendency of making a fallacious inference as such that causes us to say that things that don't exist "out there" in reality nevertheless do exist "in one's mind," as if their existence is necessarily implied by virtue of being an object of consciousness. For Husserl, that is simply a mistake, as it was considered a moment ago with the "bent" oar.

From the consideration of the above instances, one comes across in principle, Husserl convincingly advances his third claim on intentionality: the intended object (the object of intentionality) need not necessarily exist—within or without the mind.

In Husserl's scheme of the make-up of phenomenological experience, there are two categories or kinds of contents, which can be identified as truly or "genuinely" immanent contents and the "directly given" contents (which are immanent in the second sense).<sup>xii</sup> The genuinely immanent contents correspond to the acts and sensations in the mind. This combination of conscious acts and sensations make intentionality possible i.e. through those acts and sensations the mind can direct on or connect with a transcendental entity or illusory object. Thus, the genuinely immanent contents provide necessary "points of support" for the consciousness to

‘reach out’ and ‘lock on’ to the object of intentionality.<sup>xiii</sup> They constitute the real make-up of the intentional experience. The second category of immanent content refers to the objects (real or abstract) presented directly to the mind through the act of intentionality. That which is transcendent now becomes immanent before consciousness. Hence, the mental representations of the transcendental objects are imminent in the second sense, in accordance with Husserl’s technical definitions. (The mental representations are the direct presentations of objects or things outside the consciousness hitherto).<sup>xiv</sup> Husserl illustrates this point with this example: “I do not see color-sensations but colored things, I do not hear tone-sensations but the singer’s song, etc., etc.”<sup>xv</sup> From this example, it becomes clear that the acts and sensations are not the objects intended; they serve only to bring an object (colorful thing or singer’s song) into direct experience of consciousness.

This theory of intentionality developed and advanced as such by Husserl promisingly offers to break out of the Cartesian bind of subjectivism and to avert the threat of solipsism. Because, as it is clearly evinced by the three claims of the nature of intentionality, as discussed above, Husserl is seen to put the mind back again into direct contact with transcendent realities.<sup>xvi</sup> It goes to show that not all the mental contents are mind-dependent, but are representations of the objects or realities that are beyond the mind. On this basis—it becomes clear—Husserl’s eidetic reduction finds its reliability in the sense of describing the phenomena in terms of their essences i.e. by breaking them down into universals.

*Transcendental ego:* It may be recalled that at the early stage of Husserl’s phenomenology, the ego assumed the role of a passive spectator placed at a specific position from where the phenomena appear in a certain way. The ego, thus differing from the psychological self or the transcendental ego (which constitutes raw data), is seen to be just an empty point of perspective.<sup>xvii</sup> The ego contributes nothing to the phenomena. But in the latter part of his philosophical development, he came to look at the ego as how Kant saw it, i.e. as one that constitutes the raw data and determines the nature and content of phenomena. In effect, Husserl assigns an active role to the ego, which is that of organizing the raw data into meaningful contents, unifying them further into meaningful wholes, distinguishing one whole from another. Husserl goes on to say that all the phenomena including the raw data have been constituted at different levels or stages in the mind. On this line of thinking, Husserl goes all the way to say that “all content comes from the transcendental ego,” in total reversal of his earlier position that “all content comes from outside.”<sup>xviii</sup>

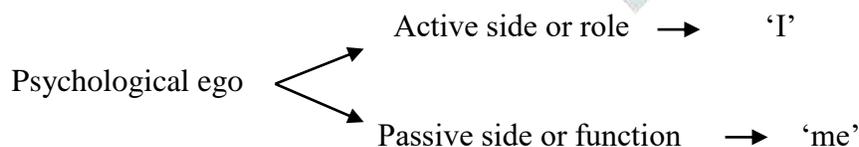
**Sartre on Ego and Consciousness:** Sartre in his famous book *The Transcendence of the Ego*, which was published in 1936, demonstrated his transitional idea from primitive phenomenological thinking of “consciousness,” moving away from the idea of Edmund Husserl’s notion of intentionality. Sartre defines intentional objects with crystal clarity as all those objects, ideas, values, numbers and consciousness itself that can be perceived or reflected upon in one’s consciousness. Here, consciousness is not only a human reality, but also our fears, hopes, wishes, desires, emotions, memories, possibilities, etc. Sartre also holds consciousness on the directed object, i.e. consciousness is consciousness of something else.<sup>xix</sup> Thus, the intentional object or

being-in-itself is a necessary foundation for consciousness. Intriguingly, Sartre avers that consciousness has no sufficient foundation. He presents it as a brute fact, without explanation, as it is with being-in-itself. The only ‘causal explanation’ Sartre tenders is that (an act of) consciousness is spontaneous. Also, in his work *The Transcendence of the Ego* he looks at ego, not as a pre-reflective or inherent component of consciousness, but is produced or constituted as a unity of all reflected acts of consciousness. Furthermore, Sartre identifies selfness as the “consciousness of oneself.”<sup>xx</sup> Consciousness of oneself will also imply or extend to, according to Sartre, the consciousness of individual lack. As for Sartre, absolute belief in the reality or veracity of the individual lack one is conscious of is the first requirement or pre-requisite. In other words, consciousness of an individual lack springs from the firm belief that there is a certain lack in oneself.<sup>xxi</sup>

Sartre does not refer to such a term as “phenomenological ego”; he also rejects the concept of “transcendental ego.” In his theoretical frame-work of consciousness, Sartre will allow only the psychological ego—the psyche, the personality, the seat of character traits, the real ‘me.’<sup>xxii</sup> This view of Sartre on ego emerges from the second part of his book *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Initially, Sartre in the first part of this book identifies the transcendental ego (which he rejects) as ‘I’ with the idea to characterize its active constituting function, as Husserl later came to accept. The pronoun ‘I’ is in the nominative case, and so stands as the grammatical subject of verbs. Thus ‘I’ is the ego as something active, which certainly fits the notion of the transcendental ego. At this stage of his theoretical development, Sartre looks at the psychological ego as a passive entity.<sup>xxiii</sup> Hence, he refers to it as ‘me.’ The pronoun ‘me’ is in the objective case, which signifies that it is at the receiving end.

Transcendental ego ↔ the ‘I’  
 Psychological ego ↔ the ‘me’

As he advances with his theory on the constitution of ego in the same book, Sartre comes to perceive the psychological ego as having two sides or functions: the active and the passive. Now there is a shift of meaning in his usage of the terminology of ‘I’ and ‘me’:



Sartre further elaborates on the distinction of the ‘I’ and ‘me’ aspects of the psychological ego:

The ‘I’ is the ego as the unity of actions. The ‘me’ is the ego as the unity of states and of qualities. The distinction that one makes between these two aspects of one and the same reality seems to us simply functional, not to say grammatical.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In the above statements, Sartre clearly distinguishes the role of the two sides of ego. On the active side, the ‘I’ constitutes the ideal unity of all spontaneous acts of consciousness. On the passive side, the ‘me’ constitutes “indirect” unity of the qualities and (mental) states. From his deliberations in his book, Sartre shows that ‘I’ is

immediately or directly involved with the phenomena or conscious acts. Whereas, it is seen that ‘me’—the passive side of ego—is linked with the qualities and states that characterize the overall personality of the individual. Sartre posits that these states and qualities are inert and passive.<sup>xxv</sup>

In order to elucidate the relation of acts of consciousness, states and qualities, Sartre employs a fictitious case of Sartre hating Peter. The sight of Peter evokes a sudden feeling of repugnance within him. He explains that there is a connection between that spontaneous act of repugnance and the state of hatred.<sup>xxvi</sup> Yet he does not find a clear logical relation between the conscious act which is active and the state which is passive. Rather, he finds the connection contradictory. He calls such occurrence of relation as “magical.”<sup>xxvii</sup> In this case, Sartre terms it as “emanation”, where the conscious act seems to proceed from the mental state.<sup>xxviii</sup> Further on, he explicates that the presence of similar states—hatred toward different individuals—hint at the presence of a quality or trait of spitefulness. He explains that such an inert quality has the potentiality to produce particular states. He calls that process “actualization.”<sup>xxix</sup> However, Sartre clarifies that the presence of one or few similar states does not necessarily imply the existence of the quality concerned. The quality may be optional.<sup>xxx</sup> For instance, my hatred for a particular woman or a few girls do not necessarily imply that I am therefore a misogynist—a quality or personality trait. By the same yardstick, an individual act or sporadic incidents of fright does not necessarily convey that one has a fearful state of mind. Sartre also indicates that there is a relation between ego (me) and the qualities or traits by which one (or ego) may be identified or characterized on a long term basis.

According to Sartre, in his work *The Transcendence of the Ego*, all acts of consciousness can be classified into two types: non-reflective or pre-reflective and reflective. He shows by example the distinction between these two kinds of conscious acts. When one is reading a moving story so that one is completely “absorbed” or “lost” in the story, one’s consciousness is caught up totally with the story.<sup>xxxi</sup> There is not a moment one is thinking about oneself while in progress with the story. There is found no act of reflecting on oneself. Here the object of the act of consciousness is just the story, where the self does not appear at all. In such a case, Sartre says that consciousness is engaged in non-reflective act. In general, when consciousness directs or intends upon an object which can be anything except the self or consciousness itself, that act is seen as non-reflective or pre-reflective.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Sartre goes on to show in contrast that consciousness is involved in a reflective act when it turns back on itself or its act(s) as the object of its intentionality. Thus it is clear from Sartre’s deliberation that consciousness can act either reflectively or non-reflectively. Obviously consciousness can not act in a third way or manner. Corollarily, any act of consciousness must be either of the reflective or non-reflective kinds or types. Recalling the principle of Husserl’s irreflexivity of intentionality an applying the same here, one obtains Sartre’s first law of consciousness: “every act of consciousness is either reflective or non-reflective, but not both.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Further on in his observations on consciousness, Sartre shows the existence of two “sides” of consciousness, distinct or apart from the types of conscious acts (pre-reflective and reflective). He calls these two sides or aspects of consciousness as ‘positional’ or ‘thetic’ and ‘non-positional’ or ‘non-thetic.’ The word ‘positional’ derives its meaning from the Greek word ‘thetic,’ which means ‘to put or place,’ similar to ‘posit’ in meaning.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Thus, the positional side of consciousness is seen to be related to the placing or putting of an object or thing as its object of consciousness.<sup>xxxv</sup> In other words, positional consciousness is responsible for the capacity of intentionality that consciousness is seen to inhere. It becomes clear that consciousness through its positional side directs upon or brings into view a thing as its intentional object. Hence, all conscious acts—non-reflective and reflective—are found to be ‘positional’ in this sense.

Non-positional side of consciousness apparently is not involved with conscious acts of its positional side. This aspect of consciousness appears to be responsible for its self-consciousness.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It enables consciousness to be aware of every act of itself. In other words, by this every act of consciousness is aware or conscious of itself, so to say. This self-awareness is not reflective since it belongs to the non-positional side of consciousness. Since, this self-awareness does not involve intending or positing, it does not violate the law of irreflexivity: consciousness simply is instantaneously aware of its every single act, *not as its intentional object*. It is as if this self-awareness or self-consciousness is self-given. Sartre illustrates this aspect of consciousness, taking the case of a person counting a package of cigarettes. He has an impression of the cigarettes in the package, and finds there are a dozen. His consciousness in the present case is positional consciousness. If someone comes along and asks him, “what are you doing?” He replies, “I am counting.” This reply does not aim at the object—a dozen cigarettes in the package—but at his conscious activity. There are not objects or perception involved. Therefore, it is a non-positional consciousness of self.

From the above consideration of positional and non-positional consciousness, one obtains Sartre’s second law of consciousness:

Every act of consciousness is both positional consciousness of some object or other, and also non-positional consciousness. (And, of course, depending on what the object is, it will be either reflective or non-reflective.)<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In other words, every act of consciousness is simultaneously accompanied by the consciousness of itself (act).

Sartre’s analysis of consciousness says that there is no such transcendental ego as the source of consciousness. For him, consciousness does not have an origin at all. Rather consciousness (awareness\*) exists in terms of intentionality of consciousness (property of mind\*)<sup>xxxviii</sup> i.e. consciousness directed at the object.<sup>xxxix</sup> So, consciousness is goal-directedness i.e. the object of intentionality, and this object is the most important point of Sartre. This evidently refers to the positional side of consciousness. On the other hand, consciousness exists in terms of awareness of act of oneself or self-awareness i.e. there is no object-directedness in this case. This alludes to the non-thetic or non-positional aspect of consciousness.

According to Sartre, consciousness is the active principle assigning meaning and relation which arises because of lack<sup>xi</sup>—the revelation or awareness of a state of lack or need in oneself. For him, consciousness is not a thing (entity), not a substance, not a subject, but a revelation or coming to awareness of the lack of something. So, personal consciousness is always a consciousness of a personal need or desire for an intentional object. This experience is appropriated pre-reflectively, prior to any interpretation which he becomes aware of in himself. For example, if I am hungry, I start to think of food in order to negate my hunger. My consciousness goes out of itself to the object (food). It shows the transcendence of my consciousness. My consciousness at the moment is fully directed toward my need or lack—to the food, to be precise.<sup>xii</sup> My consciousness is pre-reflective here. I am so caught up or absorbed with the object of my lack. The question of reflecting on how I am or my thought or action does not arise at this moment. I am oblivious of myself in this sense. Thus, in pre-reflective consciousness, an individual consciousness is totally directed on the object. Consciousness coincides fully with the object, i.e. consciousness envelops the object.

In positional consciousness the notion of nothingness appears as the distance that separates consciousness from its intentional object. In non-reflective consciousness the object is in the world outside, and a certain distance between consciousness and the object is necessary to make intentionality possible. But in the case of reflective consciousness, the object is consciousness itself. By the same requirement of intentionality, a certain distance or nothingness is involved to separate consciousness from itself in order to direct or reflect upon itself or its acts. It appears then that consciousness is able to “stand outside” itself to objectify itself. Sartre adopts Heidegger’s term ‘ekstasis’ to describe this self-transcendence of consciousness.<sup>xlii</sup>

Sartre identifies three fundamental ‘ekstases’ of consciousness, three basic ways of standing outside itself that makes it possible for consciousness to see its own reflection. In short, there are three possible ekstases in reflective consciousness.

1<sup>st</sup> ekstasis:—temporality: the sense of the passage of time separates the consecutive acts of consciousness into past, present and future acts. This facilitates one act of consciousness to become the object of another act of consciousness.<sup>xliii</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> ekstasis:—transcendence: the act of consciousness to reach out toward object(s) transcendent to itself. In the case of reflective consciousness, consciousness transcends itself to posit itself at a distance and make itself as its intentional object. In effect transcendence means intentionality.<sup>xliv</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup> ekstasis:—being-for-others: this term refers to other ‘for-itself’ or consciousnesses. The presence of “other minds” serves as a means for consciousness to stand at a distance and get a picture or reflection of itself.<sup>xlv</sup>

Another unique nature of consciousness is its constant state of flux: the being of for-itself alters or changes itself unceasingly. It does not behave at all as a stable, inert thing or substance like the in-itself beings. The being of consciousness therefore is like the being of an *event* or *process*, and not of an entity.<sup>xlvi</sup> In other words, it is more proper to say that for-itself being *happensthan* to say that consciousness exists.

Sartre employs certain observations and concepts to explain why consciousness is in a constant state of flux. First, Sartre posits that a reflective act of consciousness alters the fact of consciousness on which it is directed. This process proves to serve as an important principle in his further theorization. If this principle holds true, then every act of reflection will bring successive changes to the consciousness that does the reflection. To be precise, this process of change as such takes place on the positional side of consciousness. On the non-positional side of consciousness, Sartre observes that its self-awareness, although not reflective, is homologous to reflective consciousness, in that the same also alters what it is conscious of, to wit, consciousness itself. He explains this dynamic phenomenon by looking at consciousness as a ‘dyad.’ He calls its function as ‘reflection-reflecting.’<sup>xlvii</sup> The functional meaning of this term may be likened to a kind of mirror which reflects its own image. Thus, the dyad nature of consciousness conveys in effect that the non-positional side of consciousness like a mirror captures the ‘image’ of the event(s) on the positional side of consciousness, thereby having a kind of reflection of consciousness without undertaking any intentional act.<sup>xlviii</sup> This process within consciousness Sartre calls “Presence to Self.”<sup>xlix</sup> What this implies according to his theory is that the consciousness reflected in the mirror of the non-positional side of consciousness as such undergoes alteration by reason of the principle Sartre has stated. The implication of this dyad or “reflection-reflecting” is that consciousness perpetually undergoes change, with or without reflective act of consciousness. The for-itself being is always therefore in a process of change or flux because of its very nature or structure. In contrast to in-itself being, consciousness is never stable or stationary. It ever transcends itself or is in state of transcendence and flux. This fact of consciousness is summed up in Sartre’s pithy statement: “consciousness is not what is, and is what is not.”<sup>1</sup>

In connection to this dual nature of consciousness, Sartre claims that only the positional side of consciousness *knows* its objects. For him, knowledge is a relation of positional consciousness to its intentional objects. Thus, ‘to know’, for Sartre, is equivalent to ‘to direct at an object’ or ‘to perceive.’ In consistency with this logic of his epistemology, the self-awareness of the non-positional consciousness can not be reckoned as knowledge—for the simple reason of the absence of directedness (intentionality) or objectification on this side of consciousness.<sup>li</sup> Knowledge for Sartre therefore is of a perceptual kind. For instance, when I see the three sides of a cube, I can say that I know them as the three sides of a cube. Perception, to be more precise, is the basis of knowledge in Sartre’s epistemology. Of course, the perception that the three sides are really part of a real cube remains to be confirmed. Hence, one may infer Sartre’s definition of knowledge as “justified true perception.” This definition can be contrasted with the traditional concept of knowledge as “justified true belief.” For Sartre, belief amounts to a case of “bad faith” even as he defines belief in this sense:

But if we take belief as meaning the adherence of being (consciousness) to its object when the object is not given or is given indistinctly, then bad faith is belief.<sup>lii</sup>

From the above statement it is clearly implied that for Sartre the object of knowledge should be directly and distinctly given. This means that the same must be a perceptual phenomenon: the object must be clearly perceivable to the positional side of consciousness. In other words, the substance of knowledge is derived positionally (or through intentionality). Therefore, it follows that knowledge of things can be acquired through reflective and non-reflective acts of consciousness.

In the preceding analyses of the structure and characteristics of consciousness or being-for-itself, it becomes clear that consciousness can be seen as lack of being or a nothingness, creating its own lacks or *negatites*. Even as the same is in constant flux or change, the for-itself never coincides with itself. There exists always a fissure within consciousness so that it is not what it is. It constantly negates or alters itself so that it is what it is not. Thus, consciousness by its inherent nature is incomplete and unstable. Sartre goes on to say that at the heart of consciousness, there is a 'desire for being, or a 'desiring to be.'<sup>liiii</sup> In his theory, this desire also is inherent in the metaphysical nature of consciousness. This 'desiring to be' turns out to be the primary motivation of a fundamental project undertaken by the for-itself.

The fundamental project of consciousness Sartre talks about relates to the for-itself's awareness of the lack of self-identity. As seen above, consciousness is not what it was in the past and is not yet what it will be in the future, but presently ever-changing. In this regard, according to Sartre, a fundamental lack in the being of the for-itself is self-identity such as is seen in the unity, completeness and stability of a being-in-itself. In essence, self-identity as consciousness projects or intends (aims at) here would coincide with a kind of a perfect being—as a God. The fundamental project of the for-itself is the task of attaining this self-identity. In his observation, there are number of 'minor' projects the individual for-itself may adopt in its pursuit of fulfilling its main or primary project. The act of identifying or determining such a project can be seen as a projection of the individual toward attaining the goal of self-identity. Clearly it can be seen that projection of this kind is the same as the intentionality of consciousness in the form of directing or aiming at a particular future-being identified as the goal.

In projection, as discussed above, the object or goal lies in the future. Consciousness projects into the realm of possibilities—which are real but not yet realized. (the ontology of possibilities is suspended for the moment, to be reserved for the third chapter.) That possibility which the for-itself chooses and posits as its project-goal, obviously is not the same as perception where the intentional object is in the form of a being-in-itself. That possibility as goal does not promise or predict its actualization as in the case of perception, where more phenomena are promised toward validating the same perception. Thus, projection is distinct from perception.

And yet in projection, consciousness posits the goal as it were a being-in-itself. Without ambiguity, such is an act of intentionality. In this particular case or instance of projection, where the intentional object is what is not yet, the kind of intentional act of consciousness implicitly involves belief—the belief that the posited goal can possibly be actualized.<sup>liv</sup> In reflection, if such a belief is not there in the first place, logically, the act of choosing a possibility as a goal or end can not arise. In the absence of a belief as such, the being-for-itself or human reality can not possibly proceed with the task of fulfilling its fundamental lack or “desire for being.”<sup>lv</sup> Hence, in projection, it can be seen that belief is an important and necessary ingredient in the intentional act of positing a goal. If this inference is true, any scope of acquiring knowledge of things in future as a posited goal must be accompanied by a belief as such. In this sense, if the project is of an epistemological kind, i.e. the lack or desire refers to acquiring knowledge of beings, belief becomes a pre-requisite or is pre-supposed in such an act of projection.

**Conclusion:** It is found that Husserl’s theory of intentionality plays a pivotal role in the development of Sartre’s theory of consciousness. In Sartre’s own word, “consciousness is always a consciousness *of something*.” Consciousness is nothing more than a relation or connection between subject and object. Without the object there cannot be any kind of consciousness, according to his doctrine. In line with Husserl’s theory, Sartre reiterates that the object intentionality is always transcendent to the subject. But departing from his predecessor, Sartre asserts that the directedness of intentionality does not emanate from any transcendental ego as Husserl would have it in his later theory. For him, the acts of intentionality are spontaneous acts of consciousness. They do not proceed from any a priori ego or self-will.

Sartre presents a two-tiered consciousness: positional (thetic) and non-positional (non-thetic). The positional is the active side of consciousness that posits or directs at an object. The rules of intentionality apply to this positional side of consciousness. The non-positional consciousness is the side that provides self-awareness by a kind of mirror-reflecting the positional acts to consciousness itself. This dyad nature of consciousness is what Sartre calls ‘presence to self.’ On this side, there is no intentional act or object of consciousness whatsoever. It simply provides a constant witness to what is happening in and around the individual’s mind. Consequently, consciousness is aware of its every conscious act, whether it be imagining, perceiving or feeling of emotion.

In Sartrean scheme, positional acts of consciousness are of two types or levels: pre-reflective or non-reflective and reflective. Any positing act of consciousness whose object is transcendent to the subject is a pre-reflective act. When such a pre-reflective act of consciousness is posited as the object of intentionality, then the positional act is a reflective one. Sartre employed this scheme in his work *The Transcendence of the Ego* to do away with any self-existent *cogito* or ego. A sense of ‘I’ or ‘me’ arises as a correlate of the unity of all the reflected pre-reflective acts of consciousness. Thus, for Sartre, self or ego arises only after consciousness acts at the reflective level; there is no ‘I’ or ego at the pre-reflective level. Phenomenologically, it is the act of

intentionality or the positional act that brings consciousness into the knowledge of the object(s) posited or directed at. Likewise, by way of reflecting on its pre-reflective acts, consciousness gains in-depth knowledge. Curiously enough, Sartre insists that non-positional consciousness does not amount to knowledge. And yet for the reason of the self-awareness exerted from the non-positional side, Sartre claims that every act of consciousness is completely transparent or aware of itself.

One theoretical implication that follows from this structure of consciousness as Sartre has presented is that without any pre-existent or given ego or self-will, the acts of consciousness are not pre-determined and hence cannot be predicted. Sartre says the acts of consciousness are spontaneous and free. Another important implication is that since the acts of consciousness are transparent to itself, consciousness is fully aware of its acts, and has no excuse but is fully responsible even as the acts are spontaneously its own, and not dictated or influenced by any entity or factor within or without.

From his central thesis, existence precedes essence, Sartre's theory of human reality follows that one has not come into this world with any pre-determined nature or constitution. In his worldview, the upsurge of consciousness or appearance of human individual in the world is a contingency or without any pre-destinated purpose or plan. Therefore, according to Sartre, every individual must work out his own essence.

<sup>i</sup>MacIntyre, Ronald and David, Woodruff Smith. *The theory of Intentionality*. p.1

<sup>ii</sup>Beyer, Christian, "Edmund Husserl", *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*

<sup>iii</sup>Spade, Paul Vincent. (1995). *Jean Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*. p.46

<sup>iv</sup>Husserl, E. *Logical Investigations*. Vol. II p.79

<sup>v</sup>Husserl, E. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. p.29

<sup>vi</sup>*Ibid.*, p.27

<sup>vii</sup>Spade, Paul Vincent. (1995). *Jean Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*. p.48

<sup>viii</sup>Husserl, E. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. pp.27-28

<sup>ix</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>x</sup>Husserl, E. *Logical Investigations*. Vol. II p.22

<sup>xi</sup>*Ibid.*, p.19

<sup>xii</sup>Husserl, E. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. p.7

<sup>xiii</sup>Husserl, E. *Logical Investigations*. Vol. II p.100

<sup>xiv</sup>Husserl, E. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. pp.24-5

<sup>xv</sup>Husserl, E. *Logical Investigations*. Vol. II p., p.99

<sup>xvi</sup>Husserl, E. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. pp.12-3

<sup>xvii</sup>*Ibid.*, p.33

<sup>xviii</sup>Spade, Paul Vincent.(1995). *Jean Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*. p.55

<sup>xix</sup>Sartre, J. P. *Transcendence of the Ego*. p.44

<sup>xx</sup>Chuchill, Steven. and Reynolds, Jack. *Jean-Paul Sartre Key Concepts*.p. 222

<sup>xxi</sup>Sartre, J. P. *Being and Nothingness*. p.99

<sup>xxii</sup>Sartre, J.P. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. p.36

<sup>xxiii</sup>*Ibid.*,54

<sup>xxiv</sup>Sartre, J.P. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. p.60

<sup>xxv</sup>*Ibid.*, p.54

<sup>xxvi</sup>*Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>xxvii</sup>*Ibid.*, p.79

<sup>xxviii</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.67-8

<sup>xxix</sup>*Ibid.*, p.70

<sup>xxx</sup>*Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>xxx</sup>Ibid. p.46

<sup>xxxii</sup>Ibid. p.46

<sup>xxxiii</sup>Spade, Paul Vincent.(1995). *Jean Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*. p.89

<sup>xxxiv</sup>Ibid. p.89

<sup>xxxv</sup>Sartre, J.P. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. p.41

<sup>xxxvi</sup>Ibid. pp.46-7

<sup>xxxvii</sup>Spade, Paul Vincent.(1995). *Jean Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*. p.89

<sup>xxxviii</sup> The terms are added by the researcher to distinguish the two apparent meanings of *consciousness*, one as a mental event or phenomenon, and the other as a functional property of mind, in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>xxxix</sup>Sartre, J.P. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. p.44

<sup>xl</sup>Sartre, J.P. *Being and Nothingness*. p.196

<sup>xli</sup>Sartre, J.P. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. p.55

<sup>xlii</sup>Sartre, J.P. *Being and Nothingness*. p. 97

<sup>xliii</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-1

<sup>xliv</sup>Ibid., pp. 194-5

<sup>xlv</sup>Ibid., pp. 245-8

<sup>xlvi</sup>Ibid., p. 108

<sup>xlvii</sup>Ibid., p.196

<sup>xlviii</sup>Ibid., p.197

<sup>xlix</sup>Ibid., p.101

<sup>l</sup>Ibid., p.98

<sup>li</sup>Ibid., pp.98-9

<sup>lii</sup>Ibid., p.112

<sup>liii</sup>Ibid., p. 565

<sup>liiv</sup>Ibid., pp.98-9

<sup>lv</sup>Ibid., p.61



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