

Handouts for P335 Phenomenology and Existentialism: Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, Spring, 2010

I have gathered here relevant handouts for the above class:

- Immanence and Transcendence (with respect to Husserl's *The Idea of Phenomenology*).
- Review (of material before we finally get to Sartre himself).
- A passage from Sartre's *The Psychology of Imagination*.
- Characteristics of Being.
- The Self-Love Theory (in *Transcendence of the Ego*).
- *Transcendence of the Ego*, Part II: How the ego appears to us on reflection
- Existential Psychoanalysis.

Immanence and Transcendence

In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Lecture II (pp. 27–28, in particular), Husserl presents *two* senses of “immanence” and “transcendence.” We will distinguish them by subscripts: immanence₁/transcendence₁, immanence₂/transcendence₂.

1. Immanence₁/transcendence₁: “Real” (*reell*) or “genuine” immanence/transcendence.
 - a. Something \underline{x} is immanent₁ (“really” or “genuinely” immanent) in something else \underline{y} if and only if \underline{x} is literally and wholly “contained in” \underline{y} , like a part in its whole, or like a property in the thing it belongs to.
 - b. Something \underline{x} is transcendent₁ (“really” or “genuinely” transcendent) to \underline{y} if and only if it is *not* immanent₁ (“really” or “genuinely” immanent) in \underline{y} .
2. Immanence₂/transcendence₂. (Husserl has no special name for this.)
 - a. Something \underline{x} is immanent₂ to consciousness if and only if \underline{x} is *directly given* to consciousness, “self-given” to consciousness, present to the mind “in person” and not just “by proxy” or “by representation.”
 - b. Something \underline{x} is transcendent₂ to consciousness if and only if \underline{x} is *not* immanent₂ in it.

Things to note:

- The second sense is much more restricted than the first. Something can be immanent₂ in or transcendent₂ to only *acts of consciousness* (or, loosely speaking, “the mind”). But anything can be immanent₁ in or transcendent₁ to anything else whatever.
- We have a fairly clear criterion for immanence₂/transcendence₂: If I can describe something without *inferring* from what is directly given to me, it is immanent₂ to consciousness; if I can’t, then it is transcendent₂. It is harder to specify any such clear criterion for immanence₁/transcendence₁.
- Immanence₁ amounts to a kind of *confinement*. That is, there’s a kind of “exclusiveness” about immanence₁. If I am holding office hours (and so am immanent₁ in my office for a while), then I cannot simultaneously be at home in bed (immanent₁ in my bed). But the notion of immanence₂ does not imply any such confinement or exclusiveness. As far as our criterion of immanence₂ goes, there may very well be things that can be immanent₂ in *several* acts of consciousness. (That’s *as far as the criterion goes*. Whether in fact there *is* anything that can do that is something we’ll have to see.)
- The “phenomenological reduction” amounts to the policy of restricting our judgments to only what is immanent₂ in consciousness. So too Descartes’s resolution to confine his judgments to what he perceives “clearly and distinctly.” (In effect, the phenomenological reduction is just Husserl’s name for that first Cartesian move.)

- In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl agrees with Descartes that what is immanent₁ in consciousness is “self-given,” directly given. Hence immanent₁ → immanent₂.
- Descartes’s “second principle”—that what I perceive “clearly and distinctly” is in every case a *mental content, mind-dependent*—amounts to the converse claim, that immanent₂ → immanent₁. So, even though the two notions of immanence and transcendence are different *notions*, they in practice pick out the same things. That is, for Descartes, as long as we’re talking about what is immanent *to consciousness*, immanence₁ ↔ immanence₂, and likewise transcendence₁ ↔ transcendence₂. Husserl will disagree, and this is what Husserl means when says (p. 28) it is a *mistake* to identify these two senses.

Review

A. Descartes's two principles:

- (1) The "safe" = the directly given (i.e., the "phenomena")
- (2) The directly given are always mental, mind-dependent, the contents of the mind

B. Husserl accepts (1), but rejects (2).

Husserl calls principle (1) by a variety of names: the "phenomenological reduction," the "epochē," the "epistemological reduction," the "rejection of the natural standpoint," etc.

The way he rejects (2) is through what he calls the "eidetic reduction," "eidetic abstraction."

C. For Husserl, phenomenology \neq psychology.

The "ego" we can continue to talk about with certainty after the phenomenological reduction is *not* the *psyche*. What is it instead? What we called the *phenomenological ego*. (That is *my* term, not Husserl's.) A bare abstract "point of view." It is *not* yet the Transcendental Ego. (That comes later.)

D. Husserl thinks Descartes made *two* mistakes:

- (3) He thinks the *psyche* remains after the phenomenological reduction. (See C above.)
- (4) He thinks (2) above is an error.

E. Two senses of 'immanent'/'transcendent':

- (i) "Real" or "genuine" (*reell*) — Immanence₁/Transcendence₁:

Immanent₁ = a real "part," a constituent ("confined" to what it is immanent₁ to)

Transcendent₁ = not immanent₁

- (ii) The other sense (no special name for this) — Immanence₂/Transcendence₂:

Immanent₂ = directly given to consciousness

Transcendent₂ = not directly given, an inference is needed.

Note: The phenomenological reduction amounts to confining ourselves to what is immanent₂.

Practice

Suppose you have a *sense-data* theory of perception, whereby what we are conscious of in perception is certain mind-dependent sense impressions or sense-data. (Note: This is *not* Husserl's own view; this is just an illustration for practice.) Now let's assume you are having various sense-impressions right now—say, of a red apple. OK, now *with these assumptions*, give me an example of something that is:

- (a) Immanent₁ in that experience. (Answer: The sense-data or sense-impressions themselves.)
- (b) Transcendent₁ to that experience. (Answer: The apple itself—and lots of other things too.)
- (c) Immanent₂ in that experience. (Answer: The universal *redness*, for example.)
- (d) Transcendent₂ to that experience. (Answer: The *core* of the apple, the apple *tree*, the *nutritional value* of the apple—and lots of other things.)

Two questions

1. Can something be both immanent₁ and transcendent₂ at the same time?

This amounts to: Are there *unconscious* mental events? Husserl just *isn't saying* anything about that here. (Sartre will say emphatically *no*.)

2. Can there be something both transcendent₁ and immanent₂?

Yes. That's what the *eidetic reduction* shows us. Universals are examples of this. Recall how Husserl says that "in the subject-predicate judgments which we make concerning them [= particular mental processes], we have already gone beyond them" (Passage (6) on the handout of passages from *The Idea of Phenomenology*.) The *predicates* in those judgments are (typically) *general* words that pick out universals.

**Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*,
Part I, Chap. 1, § 3: “Second Characteristic:
The Phenomenon of Quasi Observation”**

(I have underlined passages I take to be especially significant for our purposes. Note that a lot has been omitted here that is necessary for fully understanding the passage. To get that, you will have to read the original.)

... The simplest procedure will be to examine the image in its relationship to the concept and the percept. To perceive, conceive, imagine: these are the three types of consciousnesses by which the same object can be given to us.

5 In perception I observe objects. By this we must understand that although the object enters into my perception in its completeness, I nevertheless see it only from one side at a time. Consider the example of the cube: I know it is a cube provided I have seen its six sides; but of these I can see only three at a time, never more. I must therefore apprehend them successively. And when I pass, for example, from sides ABC to sides BCD, there always remains a possibility that A has disappeared during my change of position. The existence of the cube therefore remains doubtful. ... [T]he characteristic of a perception is that the object
10 appears only in a series of profiles, of projections. The cube is certainly present to me, I can touch it, see it; but I always see it only in a certain fashion which includes and excludes at one and the same time an infinity of other points of view. We must learn objects, that is to say, multiply upon them the possible points of view. The object itself is the synthesis of all these appearances. The perception of an object is thus a phenomenon of an infinity of aspects. What does this mean for us? It means we must make a tour of objects,
15 wait until the “sugar melts,” as Bergson said.

When, on the other hand, I think of a cube as a concrete concept, I think of its six sides and its eight angles all at once; I think that its angles are right angles, its sides squared. I am at the center of my idea, I seize it in its entirety at one glance. This does not mean, of course, that my idea does not need to complete itself by an infinite progression. But I can think of the concrete essences in a single act of consciousness; I do not have to re-establish the appearance. I have no apprenticeship to serve. Such is, no doubt, the clearest difference between a thought and a perception. This is the reason why we can never perceive a thought nor think a perception. The two phenomena are radically distinct: the one is knowledge which is conscious of itself and which places itself at once at the center of the object; the other is a synthetic unity of a multiplicity of appearances, which slowly serves its apprenticeship.

25 What shall we say of the image? Is it apprenticeship or knowledge? Let us note first that it seems to belong to perception. In the one, as in the other, the object presents itself in profiles, in projections, in what the Germans designate by the apt term “Abschattungen.” Only we no longer have to make a tour of it: the cube as an image is presented immediately for what it is. When I say: “the object I perceive is a cube,” I make an hypothesis that I may have to reject at the close of my perceptions. When I say: “the object of which I have an image at this moment is a cube,” my judgment is final: it is absolutely certain that the object of my image is a cube. What does this mean? In perception, a knowledge forms itself slowly; in the image the knowledge is immediate. We see now that the image is a synthetic act which unites a concrete, nonimagined, knowledge to elements which are more actually representative. The image teaches nothing: it is organized exactly like the objects which do produce knowledge, but it is complete at the very moment of its appearance. If I amuse myself by turning over in my mind the image of a cube, if I pretend that I see its different sides, I shall be no further ahead at the close of the process than I was at the beginning: I have learned nothing.

... No matter how long I may look at an image, I shall never find anything in it but what I put there. It is in this fact that we find the distinction between an image and a perception. In the world of perception every “thing” has an infinite number of relationships to other things. And what is more, it is this infinity of relationships—as well as the infinite number of relationships between the elements of the thing—which constitute the very essence of a thing. From this there arises something of the overflowing in

45 the world of “things”: there is always, at each and every moment, infinitely *more* than we see; to exhaust the wealth of my actual perception would require infinite time. Let us not deceive ourselves: this manner of “brimming over” is of the very nature of objects. When we say that no object can exist without having a definite individuality we mean “without maintaining an infinity of determined relationships with the infinity of other objects.”

50 Now, the image, on the other hand, suffers from a sort of essential poverty. The different elements of an image have no relationship with the rest of the world, while among themselves they have but two or three relationships, those, for instance, that I have been able to ascertain; or those it is now essential for me to hold on to. We must not say that the other relationships exist in secret, that they wait for a bright searchlight to be directed upon them. No: they do not exist at all. ... This is what all those who consider the image to be a reborn perception fail to understand. The difference is not that of vividness but rather that the objects of the world of images can in no way exist in the world of perception; they do not meet the necessary

55 conditions.
60 In a word, the object of the perception overflows consciousness constantly; the object of the image is never more than the consciousness one has; it is limited by that consciousness; nothing can be learned from image that is not already known. It can, of course, happen that a memory image presents itself unexpectedly, and presents some new aspects. But even in such a case it presents itself in one piece of intuition, it reveals at a single stroke what it is. If I perceive a bit of turf, I must study it for a considerable period to determine where it comes from. In the case of an image I know it immediately; it is the grass of this meadow, in such a place. And this origin cannot be determined from the image: the very act that gives me the object as an image includes the knowledge of what it is. It is true that occasionally a memory-image does remain unidentified: all of a sudden I see again a dreary garden under a gray sky and I cannot recall when or where I saw that garden. But this is simply a determination that lacks an image, and no observation, no matter how prolonged, will yield the knowledge I lack. If I later discover the name of the garden it is by means of processes which have nothing to do with pure and simple observation: the image gave everything it possessed in a lump.

70 Thus the object presents itself in the image as having to be apprehended in a multiplicity of synthetic acts. Due to this fact, and because its content retains a sensible opacity, like a phantom, because it does not involve either essences or generating laws but only an irrational quality, it gives the impression of being an object of observation: from this point of view the image appears to be more like a perception than a concept. But in other respects the image teaches nothing, never produces an impression of novelty, and never reveals any new aspect of the object. It delivers it in a lump. No risk, no anticipation: only a certainty. My perception can deceive me, but not my image. Our attitude towards the object of the image could be called “quasi-observation.” Our attitude is, indeed, one of observation, but it is an observation which teaches nothing. If I produce an image of a page of a book, I am assuming the attitude of a reader, I look at the printed pages. But I am not reading. And, actually, I am not even looking, since I already know what is written there.

80 ... To construct a certain consciousness of a table as an image is at the same time to construct the table as the object of an imaginative consciousness. The object as an image is therefore contemporaneous with the consciousness I take of it, and it is determined exactly by that consciousness: it includes nothing in itself but what I am conscious of ... This is also the reason why the world of images is a world in which nothing happens. I can at will develop this or that object into an image, make a cube turn, make a plant grow, make a horse run, without producing the least shift between the object and consciousness. Not a moment of surprise: the object which is moving is not alive, it never precedes the intention. But neither is it inert, passive, “worked” from without, like a marionette: consciousness never precedes the object, the intention reveals itself to itself at the same time that it realizes itself, in and by its realization.

Characteristics of Being

BEING	
BEING-IN-ITSELF	BEING-FOR-ITSELF
<p>Being [-in-itself] is <i>in-itself</i>. It is “uncaused,” independent. This is based on Sartre’s atheism.</p>	<p>Being [-for-itself] is <u>not</u> in-itself. It is dependent (on the in-itself). This follows from the theory of intentionality.</p>
<p>Being [-in-itself] <i>is</i>. It is “absurd,” a violation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. This also is based on Sartre’s atheism.</p>	<p>Being [-for-itself] <i>is</i>. It too is “absurd.” But because it depends on the in-itself, there is a kind of “necessity” (= <i>facticity</i>) about it.</p>
<p>Being [-in-itself] is <i>what it is</i>. It is “opaque,” inert, “solid.” It is “full positivity.” There is nothing negative about it. This is based on Parmenidean considerations.</p>	<p>Being [-for-itself] is <u>not</u> what it is (and <u>is</u> what it is not). It is “translucent,” flickering, lively. There is negativity all through it. It is paradoxical and contradictory (but <u>real</u>).</p>

The Self-Love Theory

Thesis: All our actions are motivated by selfish concerns.

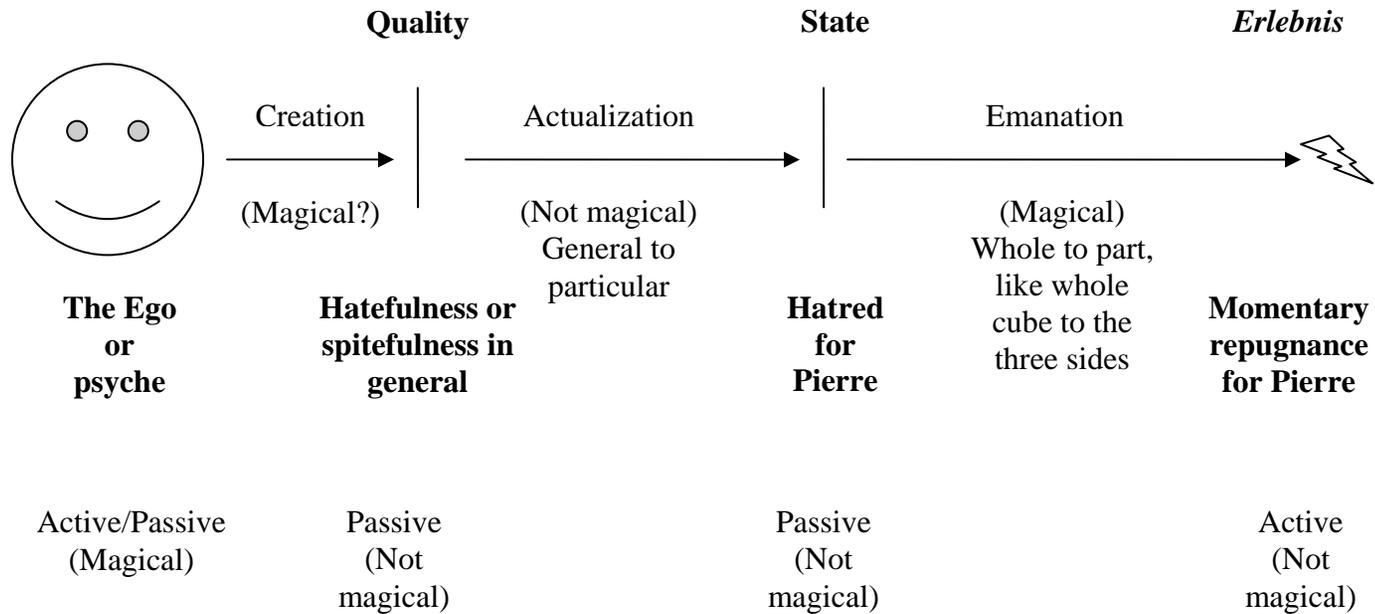
Argument:

1. Every action of ours is directed at (motivated by) achieving some goal or other. (Without some purpose, we wouldn't act at all.) And furthermore, that goal always doing something to the object of consciousness (acquiring it, changing it, avoiding it, etc.). (Note: "Actions" here don't include purely physiological things like random twitchings, digestion, etc., but only purposeful behavior.)
2. Furthermore, even while I am engaged in the action, I fully expect it to have a particular kind of effect on me — on the way I feel. (It will relieve my distress, satisfy a grudge, make me proud, etc.) And expectation is a mental attitude. The fact that I do expect that effect is shown by the fact that if it does have that effect, I'm not surprised by the outcome.
3. ∴ It appears to follow that every action is directed at (motivated by) selfish concerns. Every action involves a reflective component — the goal is to bring about a certain result in me.
4. Now it certainly doesn't always appear that this is so. We have examples that, on the surface, seem to be straightforwardly altruistic (helping Pierre).
5. ∴ Therefore, since I'm not consciously being selfish, my selfishness in those instances must be unconscious.

Steps 1, 2 and 4 are premises. Step 1 in fact can be regarded as more or less a "definition" of the kind of thing we're talking about. Steps 2 and 4 are empirical observations. Step 3 is a conclusion from steps 1–2, and step 5 is a conclusion drawn from steps 3–4.

Sartre will grant all the premises (1, 2 and 4), but reject the inference from steps 1–2 to step 3. (And, since step 3 is undercut in this way, it is no longer available to use as a premise to support step 5.)

Transcendence of the Ego, Part II — How the ego appears to us on reflection



Thus, the ego or psyche *appears* on reflection to be the *source* of our psychological qualities, states, and momentary *Erlebnisse* (“experiences”). But in fact, it’s just the other way around. The *Erlebnis* (the momentary repugnance for Pierre) is the only thing that is really “evident” (in Husserl’s sense of being “self-given”) here. All the rest is just what we *read into* that experience, the way we *constitute* it, what we regard it *as*. (We regard the momentary repugnance as merely one *part* of, one “profile” on, the larger *whole* that is the *hatred* for Pierre, which in turn is merely a *particular* case of the more *general* quality of being hateful toward everybody—all of which is viewed as, somehow, a product of the ego or psyche.) Hence, from the point of view of *constitution*, the arrows should be pointing the opposite direction. We start with the *Erlebnis*, and constitute the rest in stages, from right to left. But the way it *seems* to us on reflection is just the opposite, from left to right.

Existential Psychoanalysis

Freudian “explanation”

	<u>Sartre</u>	<u>Freud</u>
(1)	The empirical desire, the particular fact of consciousness	The empirical desire
(2)	The original project (= the person)	The complex
(3)	The desire to be got (= the general structure of all original projects)	The Pleasure Principle (= the general structure of the Id)

Causal (explanatory) direction ↑
*

Sartrean “explanation”

	<u>Sartre</u>	<u>Freud</u>
Explanatory Direction ↑ * Particular {	(1) The empirical desire, the particular fact of consciousness	The empirical desire
	(2) The original project (= the person)	The complex
General {	(3) The desire to be God (= the general structure of all original projects)	The Pleasure Principle (= the general structure of the Id)

Structural	Sartre	Freud	Transcendence
Profile (1)	The empirical desire, the particular fact of consciousness	The empirical desire	Momentary repugnance for Pierre
Whole (2)	The Original Project (= the person)	The Complex	The state of hatred
Universal Pattern	(3) The Desire to be God (= the general structure of all original projects)	The Pleasure Principle (= the general structure of the Id)	The quality of hatefulness in general
			* Ego