PHENOMENOLOGY, LANGUAGE AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Maurice Roche
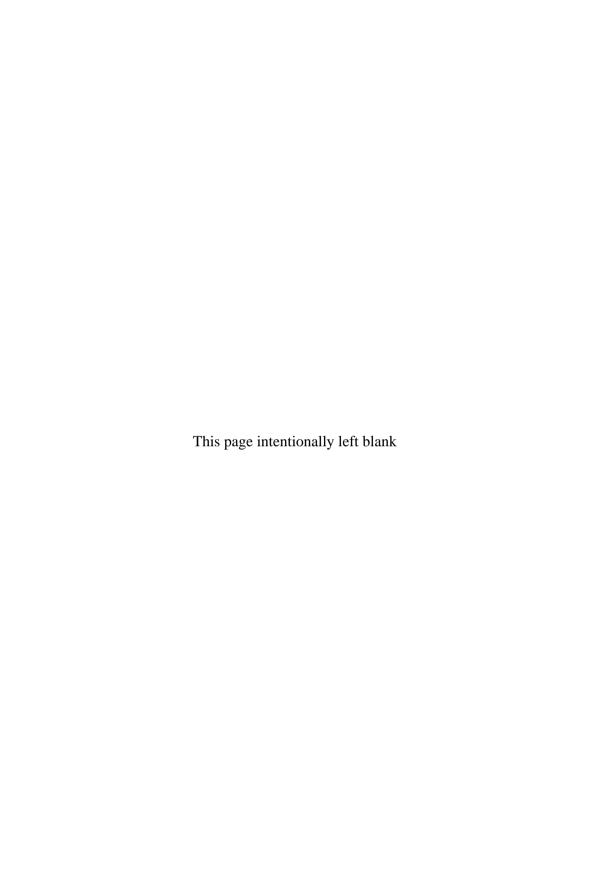
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Phenomenology, language and the social sciences

Maurice Roche

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Introduction

In modern philosophy there have been a number of self-styled 'revolutions' and 'movements'. This book is an examination of two of them, phenomenology and conceptual analysis (or ordinary language philosophy). The main questions it tries to answer are these. What are the views of the two schools on the explanation and understanding of thought and action? Are they similar to each other in any important respects? And how do such views relate to psychological and sociological analyses of thought and action?

Answering the first question has called for a fairly detailed description and analysis of the main texts and arguments of the two schools. This provides for the answer to the second question above, viz. that the two schools *are* similar in important respects, to be proposed. The overall argument here is that phenomenology and conceptual analysis have what may be called 'humanistic' features in common. Both are opposed to the application of natural scientific procedures, theories, analogies and aspirations in the human and social sciences. They are particularly opposed to the mechanism and reductionism of philosophical standpoints like logical positivism or empiricism. Both advocate a descriptive approach to human experience as an important method for philosophy and the social sciences. And finally both can be seen to rely on virtually the same theory of man.

Their common 'humanism', like that of the young Marx, thus appears in their theories of knowledge and of being. Other more loose and less analysable usages of 'humanism', in anti-theological moralising for instance, are not relevant to our use of the term here.

The third question mentioned above concerns the relation of this humanistic philosophy to the social sciences, here understood to include psychology as well as sociology. The overall argument advanced is that psychological theories tend to be mechanistic

and reductionist whereas sociological theories tend to be anti-psychologistic and humanistic. The dichotomy in philosophy between humanism and positivism is played out in the social sciences in the dichotomy between psychological and sociological explanations of human action. Mental illness, for instance, can be understood psychologically in terms of genetic abnormality, or inborn personality traits, or environmental conditioning, or fixation of the personality at a certain stage of its sexual and super-ego development in infancy, or a mixture of these factors. For such explanations and the forms of therapy based on them, the actor's, or patient's, experience and accounts of his own actions, are symptoms of processes not experienced by him. Thus only the scientific psychological observer and not the actor can give some account of them. Sociological explanations on the other hand accord the actor's accounts some value as explanatory in themselves, and not as symptomatic of unseen explanatory processes. To take an extreme case, when the 'paranoic' claims that his mother/his father/his job/his love-life/his psychiatrist/his country, or whatever, 'is driving me mad', the sociologist takes this seriously. It offers him an insight into the actor's experience of the world, how the actor conceives and perceives meanings in his social situation. The sociologist attempts to reconstruct the main features of the actor's developing situation, the successive interactions between him, members of his family, his friends, police, doctors, judges, and ultimately asylum staff and inmates who are involved in the labelling and defining of the actor in his career of madness. How the sociological humanistic approach to mental illness emerged in part as a reaction against the reductionist implications of Freud's psycho-analytic approach, will be discussed in some detail in chapters 6 and 7.

Even conventional and classical sociology has significant humanistic elements, in spite of its too common positivistic and scientistic veneer. This veneer, generated in particular by the institutionalisation of sociology as a 'profession' in the United States, has been cracking up and falling away in recent years. Minus the veneer, sociology reveals itself as singularly lacking in solid achievements, and as naively unaware of the implications of its entanglements with the buyers of information and the manipulators of men, and as profoundly and inextricably enmeshed in everyday common-sense reasoning.

By making clear the nature of the humanistic philosophical critiques of psychology and sociology, I hope to add a few more voices to the rising tide of criticism of the blinkered pretensions of conventional sociology which reflect, where they do not serve, the dehumanising features of mature capitalist society. This is not at all to recruit Wittgenstein, Husserl and the others with whom I am

concerned in the book, to the role of social criticism and radicalism. The imaginative re-writing of philosophical history which that would require is beyond me. But it is to indicate the complex problem of mutual relations of philosophy, sociological 'knowledge' and social reality. At the very least, philosophy always has some degree of autonomy *vis à vis* social reality, some degree, however minimal, of transcendence. Humanistic philosophy may well be analysed by sociology as being a parasite on the scientific culture of a secular, rational, technological society, or further as 'bourgeois ideology'. But then sociology itself is subject to the same sociological analysis. And like sociology, philosophy is never *merely* parasitic and *only* ideology. The philosophy of a society like the religion of a society and like the 'madness' of an individual is never merely a symptom, a reflex response. It is, like religion and madness, a form of conscious-ness. And forms of consciousness, given that they are intrinsically social, as we will observe in the course of our argument, have a degree of autonomy and integrity in their internal structures of meaning. A humanistic sociology lives with the complexity that this imposes on its so-called 'sociology of knowledge', without dissipating or reducing that complexity. And part of this complexity is the fact that the philosopher's argument besides being sociologically explained can be listened to as having implications for sociology's self-consciousness, if not for its practice. Periods of re-evaluation of belief systems and their methods necessarily involve an inherently philosophical maneouvre of 'going back to basics'. The present is such a period of re-evaluation for the belief systems and practices comprising sociology. And as such it requires, besides political critiques of sociology as a practice, philosophical critiques of sociology as a belief system. Its beliefs concern social action and social structures, their relations and the methods most appropriate for their study. The humanistic philosophies of phenomenology and conceptual analysis have important arguments concerning these topics which thus deserve the sociologist's attention. The emergence within sociology of a movement like ethnomethodology, whose various proponents explicitly invoke the terms and concepts of both schools, adds to the necessity for the sociologist to do more than merely 'explain away' phenomenology and conceptual analysis. He must, besides, try to understand them. The clarification and criticism of the two schools that is attempted in this book is addressed to this need for sociology to understand and to come to terms with humanistic philosophy.

A word about organisation. The book is divided into two main parts, the first giving an account of phenomenology, conceptual analysis and logical empiricism (chapters 1, 2 and 3 respectively) as schools of philosophy. Chapter 3, in particular, attempts to define

the reductionist idea of psychological and sociological science against which humanistic philosophy has developed.

Part two is mainly devoted to tracing out the reductionist idea in psychological theories, and the two versions of the humanistic critique of this idea as it appeared in the different theories. Behaviourist psychology, Gestalt psychology and Freudian psychology (chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively) are progressively more ambiguous formulations of reductionism. Phenomenology and conceptual analysis have both produced important critiques of reductionism in these three areas. Similarly, Weber's sociology, committed as it was to a humanistic method, has nevertheless generated critiques, albeit fraternal ones, by both schools. These are examined in chapter 8. Chapter 7 discusses humanistic psychiatric and sociological approaches to the specific area of mental illness which counter the ultimately reductionist implications of Freudian psycho-analytic theory. And chapter 9 concludes by stating the broad underlying themes of the two forms of humanistic philosophy, and indicating how they relate to problems of theory and method in sociology.

part I

The philosophical schools

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1 Phenomenology

There is some truth in the argument that each successive phenomen-
ologist produces a different meaning for the term 'phenomenology'.
If this were completely true then the notion of a phenomenological
'school', or of a phenomenological 'movement' (Spiegelberg, 1969,
vols 1 and 2)[1] would be hard to justify. However, the argument is
not completely true, and there do exist common denominators
which will be outlined here.

One such common denominator is the injunction, accepted in
theory and practice by all phenomenologists, to 'be true to the
phenomenon'. That is, to describe that which is given in experience,
that which you and others experience, that which appears to be the case,
etc. This would seem to be no more than the traditional empiricists
maxim: 'know the facts'. But phenomenologists interpret the
injunction more readily in terms of the Socratic maxim: 'know
yourself'. This is because they hold that description of experience
reveals facts about consciousness, about the *ways* man experiences
the world, as well as directly revealing facts about the world.

It is useful to keep a simple theme like this in mind when analysing
the ostensibly disorderly developments of phenomenological ideas
by successive philosophers. We deal, in the main, with the contrast
between Husserl's pure phenomenology on the one hand, and
existential and ontological phenomenology, epitomised by Sartre,
Merleau-Ponty, Schutz and Heidegger, on the other. This contrast
is introduced by a discussion of the contribution of Brentano to the
ideas of the phenomenological school.

Brentano

Brentano was the first major figure of the phenomenological school.
Much of what he wrote was later rejected by his pupil, Husserl, but,

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with the later re-assessment in his turn of Husserl's work by exist-entialist phenomenologists, we can now see more clearly Brentano's importance.[2]

Brentano founded the idea of a phenomenological psychology in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, first published in 1874. He supported the idea that philosophy had to base itself on the investigations and discoveries of such an empirical enterprise, rather than be a self-justifying activity of reason.

Brentano also founded one of the main epistemological ideas in phenomenology, that of the intentionality or 'aboutness' of conscious activity. And since an epistemology always implies an ontology (in that a theory of knowledge implies a theory of being, concerning a knower and something known, in order to give any sense to the analysis of the knowing-relation between them), Brentano also made ontological claims as to the basic nature of human existence in a way characteristic of later existentialist phenomenology.

Brentano's phenomenological psychology was presented as a purely descriptive study of the mental acts of persons. He was primarily concerned with classifying and categorising modes of experiencing, and types of consciousness. One major source of data would be each individual's description of their private domains of experience. Brentano disliked the term 'introspection' and preferred to use the term 'inner perception' to refer to this source of data and this method of investigation. The difference is quite a funda-mental one, and has been missed by critics of phenomenology. They tend to label phenomenology as a form of introspection, and they can build up a sound case to show that the notion of introspection is a confused and inapplicable analogue of ordinary visual concepts and experiences. Brentano himself poked fun at introspective psychologists who had only come up with 'a tumult of confused ideas and numerous headaches', from their observations of inner goings-on (quoted in Rancurello, 1968, p. 31).

Introspectionists basically held to a 'bucket' theory of the mind, in that they were looking for 'contents', sedimented accumulations of sensations, associations and the like. Brentano held that con-sciousness is an activity, constituted in relations between the active subject and the object he is conscious of. That is, consciousness is always 'consciousness of' something; in the activity of thinking, there is something thought about; in the activity of believing, there is something that is believed; in the activity of loving there is some-thing loved, and so on for all forms of conscious activity. Mind or consciousness exists in these intentional relations, functions and uses; as Sartre was to put it in a somewhat different context years later, consciousness exists 'as a wind blowing towards objects'. And much as one would not feel a wind if one were looking in still

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air, so introspectionists, looking for mental things 'in' a passive mental receptacle called the mind, would not feel the work of mind in the subject's activity. What could they expect to find in their mind-bucket, a thought perhaps, or maybe a sensation? Assume they are successful and that their mental fishing produced at the end of the line a Thought. How are they to describe this catch? What name are they to give it, what is it called? In the end it will be seen that the only way to describe the catch is to say what the thought was a thought of.

Let us say that the introspectionist has fished up the Thought that 'the Earth moves around the Sun'. What is distinctively mental about that, what does it tell him about the nature of his mind? The oddity of the whole procedure may unsettle our introspectionist, he may even switch to hard-headed no-nonsense behaviourism or even further to neurology, convinced that consciousness is a hoax. He has looked 'inside his mind and has found out something about the solar system outside'. But while introspection has failed to reveal a distinctively mental thing, in its own terms, Brentano would assert that the paramount fact of intentional objective reference by the conscious subject *has* been revealed. What has been seen is that a correct description of consciousness is required from the very beginning, and this is a description of referential activity, not a description of some hypothetical inactive mental receptacle. It is just such self-awareness of one's own mental activity that Brentano is getting at with his term 'inner perception'.

Inner perception is simply knowing what one is now doing, being able to put one's own conscious activity at any particular moment under some description such as, for instance, 'daydreaming', 'calculating', 'lying', 'missing the point', etc. Inner perception is an ordinary comprehensible reflective turn, whereas introspection is an extra-ordinary, incomprehensible mental contortion.

So the main source and the main method of Brentano's phenomenological psychology was to be 'inner perception' of on-going conscious activity. Another source was held to be individuals' memory of past conscious activities. Both of these sources suffered from the main methodological problem accompanying any kind of self-testimony subjectivism, that is the impossibility of inter-subjective checking of the alleged facts, and thus the possibility of dishonest witness. His final source was less suspect from these angles. It was the 'externalisation of the psychic life of other persons' in verbal communication, autobiographical accounts, 'human achievements and voluntary acts' (ibid., p. 32). And he specifically mentioned study of the behaviour of infants, adults in primitive societies, the mentally ill, socio-cultural phenomena and even animal studies.

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However Brentano proposed this programmatic descriptive psychology of experience in harness with what he called 'genetic' or 'explanatory' psychology. That is, he took very seriously 'the weakness of all non-physiological psychology' and granted that the foundations of such a psychology 'would always remain insufficient and unreliable' (ibid.). Therefore he proposed that psychology is basically a split-level psycho-physical study, part phenomenological description of experience, and part neurological explanation of the genesis of experience by reference to organic brain-cell processes. Yet these two studies would be as different as chalk and cheese and Brentano fully recognised this. In fact he was a great propagandist *against* what he called 'physiological reductionism' in psychology.

In spite of his conception of the 'bipartite psycho-physical' nature of the psychological enterprise, he was able to write in 1874: 'Not only the surrender of psychological investigation to physiological research, but also the admixture of the latter to the former seems by and large counter-indicated. On the whole, to this day, there are only a few ascertained physiological facts which are suited to shed light on psychic phenomena' (ibid., p. 72). Nearly a century later, it could be argued, this state of affairs still holds true. However, having differentiated two distinct psychologies (phenomenological-descriptive on the one hand, and genetic-explanatory on the other) Brentano provided no justification for keeping them together. He merely papered over the basic differences by referring to them both as equal constituents of the one study—psychology. Having recognised the 'weakness of all non-physiological psychology' he proceeded to outline the programme of just such a psychology. He also devoted considerable effort to criticising the inadequacies of the current English school of physiological psychology (ibid., p. 73). The general impression given by Brentano's tacking to and fro between physiology and phenomenology is that of his respect for the prospective extension of science to the area of Mind, being modified by his desire to make such an extension fully self-aware and adequate to the distinctive nature of Mind.

In this way he was unlike Wilhelm Dilthey, who in the 1880s launched a critique of the new science of psychology, in so far as it had any resemblance to, and inspiration from, the natural sciences (see Hodges, 1969 and Rickman, 1961). Dilthey's distinctions between mental/cultural phenomena and physical phenomena, and between the methods adequate to them, take almost the same form as Brentano's distinctions. And Dilthey's contribution to phenomenological interpretations of sociology and psychiatry, through Max Weber and Karl Jaspers respectively, with the concept of *Verstehen*, is probably just as important as Brentano's various contributions to the phenomenological school. Yet Brentano

declared himself as the interpreter and guide of scientific psychology whereas Dilthey repudiated the very idea of it. Brentano is in this respect out of step with a main characteristic of the phenomenological school, which has been to contrast its own methods, theories and findings against natural scientific claims, in the area of human action and experience. Dilthey proposed such a clear contrast, whereas Brentano argued that in the area of psychology, in particular, phenomenology can *complement* natural scientific methods and findings, rather than compete with them.

Brentano's outline of the programme of a phenomenological psychology was, thus, not embedded in a fundamental critique of the claims of natural science to the humanities, (on this point see Husserl, 1970a, pp. 233-5,298 and *passim*). But the elements of such a critique were present in Brentano's psychological and philosophical writings, and when drawn together appear as an anticipation of the existentialist phenomenology of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

All philosophers, wittingly or unwittingly, make use of onto-logical axioms and assertions, concerning what kinds of things, in the final analysis, can and do exist, and in what way they exist. Phenomenology, unlike most other modern philosophic fashions, makes explicit its ontological commitments. Although these do change from one phenomenologist to another, they all tend to hold that mental phenomena have as real and as unavoidable an existence, albeit in a different way, as have physical phenomena. And in some cases an idealist kind of primacy of mental over physical existence emerges. Instead of accepting the materialist thesis that only things that can be touched, smelled, heard, seen or tasted can be said to exist, which would make mental phenomena non-existent in that they cannot be sensed, the idealist argues that judging, naming, discriminating, etc., are primary and that physical things only exist secondarily as the correlates of these mental phenomena, that is as 'the named', 'the discriminated', etc.

Brentano had begun in more or less the idealist manner indicated above, even though he expressed a dislike for the German tradition of idealism. He had differentiated two main classes of existents, mental and physical. But mental phenomena were basic because they contained the class of 'physically active subjects', in terms of which mental states and physical things had their existence (Rancurello, 1968, p. 46). Thus mental phenomena such as knowledge, joy and desire, like physical phenomena such as a fire or a table, all exist as 'immanent objectivities' in (a) consciousness. They exist as the intentional objects of some mental activity and orientation on the part of the individual conscious subject. However, knowledge, joy and desire also exist 'actually' as these subjectively generated objectivities, whereas tables and fires exist 'phenomenally'

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in subjective consciousness (see Farber, 1943, p. 13). This idealistic type of argument has the effect of making desire, etc., more real to consciousness than tables, etc. Brentano later went back on this ontological analysis when he saw the extremes it was taken to by his students, Husserl and Meinong, and he became unwilling to allow 'irreal' mental objects any status at all, compared to physical realities (Rancurello, 1968, p. 36; Spiegelberg, 1969, vol. 1, p. 48).

But until this change of view, Brentano had, in his philosophical writings, asserted the existence of consciousness and analysed its central operating principle, that of intentionality. While in his psychological writings he had asserted the existence of individual personal consciousnesses, and had analysed the principles of operation of personal consciousness in outlining the programme of phenomenological description.

Apart from Husserl, most of the phenomenological school, particularly Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, have a great desire to relate ontological analyses of consciousness in general, to descriptions of individual consciousness in action. With Brentano they analyse consciousness in general in order to better understand it in particular, in order to understand the world of people, human existence better. Thus it is always an assumption of the phenomenological school that there exists a world of people, whose distinguishing characteristics include the 'possession' of individual consciousness. There exists a world of numerous subjective unities of experience, called Selves or Persons. This is the rock-bottom of assertions about being made by the phenomenological school. From it can be reconstructed their analyses of the being of consciousness, etc. But their most basic ontological assertion about the furniture of the world always involves the assumption that there are at least Persons, and Persons have, besides organic and other defining characteristics, the paramount defining characteristic of being unities of consciousness, interpretative centres of sensory and communicative information, both in terms of acceptance and of generation of such information (see chapter 9 below).

Brentano implies such an ontology of Persons when he discusses the concept of Self in his prospective psychology. He believes that a subject, the self, underlies 'the totality of our psychic life' at any given moment. It is the 'common belongingness (of our psychic acts) to *one* real thing', he asserts, 'which constitutes the unity of which we are speaking'. Conceived in this way, he considers that the unity of consciousness is 'one of the most important tenets of psychology (Rancurello, 1968, p. 42). Because of the interaction in phenomenology between psychology and philosophy it would be fair to say that what is axiomatic to the one is axiomatic to the other, that what is an untestable meta-theory to the psychology is an

ontological assertion to the philosophy. We will consider this at greater length when we deal with existentialist phenomenology proper. Suffice it to say that Brentano, almost unwittingly, anticipated this turn in phenomenology because of the close relation he felt ought to exist between philosophical and psychological studies and because of the way he felt free to introduce ontological notions into psychological studies. This has led one of Brentano's biographers to write of his 'existentialist metaphysics' (ibid., p. 67).

Before finishing with Brentano it is worth looking a little closer at his own analysis of consciousness, which he considered as a contribution to the phenomenological description of experience. As has been seen, he considered his main discovery to be the intentionality or 'about-ness' of all mental phenomena. Thus he wrote: 'a common feature of everything psychical consists in what has been called by a very unfortunate and ambiguous term, consciousness, i.e. in a subject-attitude, in what has been termed *intentional* relation to something...' (ibid., p. 45). It follows that the various 'modes of consciousness' or 'fundamental classes of psychic phenomena' are simply particular manifestations of such an 'attitude'. The basic task of descriptive phenomenological psychology consists in revealing and sorting out the various possible 'attitudes of the subject to the object', or 'modes of relation to the object', describing them, and showing their dynamic interrelationships.

Brentano himself identified three major classes of intentionality, or subject attitude to object, and they were—representation, judgement and affectivity. Representational intentionality refers to primitive awareness of something by the subject; for instance, mere awareness of what it is that is imagined, or thought, or sensed by the subject. Concerning this Brentano said: 'We speak of representation whenever something appears to us' (ibid.). Judgemental intentionality is an attitude by the subject to an object whereby the subject accepts the object as true, or rejects it as false. And affective intentionality is an attitude by the subject to the object which expresses love or hate of the object by the subject. It is a class of intentionality defined by what is not included in the previous two classes, and as such it includes what Brentano calls: 'The phenomena of love and hate', 'emotions', 'feeling and will', and 'interest'.

In explicating this analysis further, Brentano feels obliged to extend his conception of that 'unfortunate and ambiguous term', consciousness. The formula: 'All consciousness is consciousness-of', is extended to 'All consciousness is consciousness-of, and is self-conscious' (ibid.). As a statement of some kind of universal fact, this extended formula is as unacceptably as the original formula was acceptable. It is the case, for instance, that when I am immersed in a chess problem that the problem is an intentional objectivity estab-

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lished and sustained as such by my attention and intellectual effort. But it is not necessarily the case at all that I know what I am doing under the description of it just given. Or, to take another example, hating somebody is doing just that, it is *not* being self-consciously aware that hating is 'what I am doing'.

What *is* the case is that every person is *capable* of being self-consciously aware of their mental acts or what they are doing. Thus it would be correct to say: 'All consciousness is consciousness-of, and is necessarily *capable* of being known/reflected upon/being brought under a description by the subject'. But it is simply inadequate phenomenology to say that every consciousness is *ipso facto* a self-consciousness. So it is better to interpret Brentano's statement: 'Every psychic act... implies the consciousness of itself' (ibid., p. 46), in this light of possibility. It is only in this light that a descriptive psychology of consciousness makes sense. Every subject is *not* already completely self-conscious of all that he is and all that he does simply by virtue of being a conscious agent. It requires a reflective turn to know about oneself, and few of us make that turn for few of all the possible occasions that we could. Thus Brentano's notion of 'inner perception' could be simply interpreted as a request to us to be more self-conscious, to put more of our ongoing experiences under descriptions. Of course, the descriptive psychologist would be concerned with other sources and methods than this, as already indicated, but he would also be required to be self-aware in this way.

Brentano's statement, then, that 'Every psychic act... has a double object' (ibid.), its primary intentional object, and itself as a psychic act, is unacceptable as phenomenological description, because possibly the majority of human experiences are lived-through, not reflected upon. But it is acceptable as a statement of what we are capable of, indicating the main area of investigation of a phenomenological psychology. And for prospective investigators it would have been better had Brentano expressed the concept of intentionality more rigorously in the following fashion: 'Every psychic act has an intentional object of *another*, and *later*, psychic act'. Brentano's conception of 'inner perception' as description of 'ongoing psychic processes' indicates his lack of rigour in this respect. He allowed a completely unanalysed notion of the possible co-temporarity of thinking something, and describing *that* one is thinking, to lead him to assert that the psychic act of thinking something necessarily involves its reflective description by the subject. In fact the co-temporality is spurious. When a man is describing that he is thinking of something he cannot be thinking of the something. And when he is thinking of the something, he is not doing something else like describing what he is doing. There is thus an intermixed temporal

sequence of two distinct kinds of acts, for the active investigator, not the co-temporal ongoing of two halves of the same act, as Brentano seems to assert.

Generally we might sum up Brentano's position in the phenomeno-logical school as follows. He gave the school some of its basic inspirations, although in a relatively unsystematic way. Both the notion of phenomenological psychology, which he first explicitly used as a term (1888 lectures), and outlined as a programme (1874), and the notion of intentionality as the defining characteristic of consciousness, stem from Brentano. In his work the ontological primacy of some concept of Person first emerges. This anthro-pomorphic, man-centred ontology, as developed in later writers, is a defining feature of the phenomenological school.

The other main feature of the school, which could be called 'experiential empiricism' also first emerges with Brentano. He was prepared to take issue with the epistemology of traditional sensory empiricism; with its restrictions on the kinds of experience that are there to be studied, and with its restrictions on the kind of evidence we can bring to justify knowledge-claims. He also began the phenomenological school's effort to disassociate itself from naive introspection. Finally, he was an explicit, if sometimes ambiguous, critic of physiological reduction in the study of conscious agency, as were all later phenomenologists. Brentano's psychological programme inspired much of the work of both Carl Stumpf and William James (ibid., ch. 3; see also Spiegelberg, 1969, vol. 1, pp. 55 and 66-9), while his personal sense of mission, as much as his philosophy, inspired Husserl, to whom we now turn.

Husserl and pure phenomenology

Husserl's intellectual development went through several distinct stages, but generally speaking the stage of pure phenomenology is recognised by phenomenologists as being the most important.[3] This recognition is ambiguous because it is fair to say that few of his disciples and pupils actually try to practise the specific reflective techniques of pure phenomenology. In fact most are prepared to criticise Husserl for the Platonic idealism inherent in pure pheno-menology. And yet the ideas exert a fascination that makes a comprehensive rejection of them almost impossible within the school. But perhaps the most interesting stage of his writing is the final one, the decade up to his death in 1936. Here, at last, he began to tackle ontological and existential problems concerning man's existence and coexistence among men. Here we find also his growing suspicion that his pure phenomenological concepts did not fit the new problems. The First World War and the rise of Hitler in pre-war Germany

could also be said to have had its effects on Husserl, reinforcing his desire to understand history, culture and inter-subjectivity.

Husserl's early philosophical work began with an attempt to apply Brentano's descriptive psychology to his own special area, mathematics.[4] However, he became disillusioned with this project, and instead launched an attack on the 'psychologism' involved in trying to base logic on empirical psychology (1970b, vol. 1, pp. 90-197). He radically reformulated Brentano's conceptions of descriptive psychology and inner perception to mean rather the intuition of essence by the subject (1967, p. 23). He then attempted to found logic on such self-evident insights and essential intuitions (1969). 'Phenomenological description' thus took on a sense different from that given to it by Brentano. Husserl used this new sense to drive home his antipathy to traditional Humean empiricism as a theory of knowledge (1970b, vol. I, pp. 115-29, 402-26).

He liked to portray Hume as the first and greatest, although unwitting, descriptive phenomenologist. And he claimed that Hume deceived himself into thinking that he was some kind of empirical psychologist 'introspecting' particular sense-data, and building up generalisations to account for ordinary mental phenomena like thinking, remembering, calculating, etc. Husserl claims that on the contrary, Hume's object is to exhibit the essential in the particular, and there is no attempt to generalise and compare case-histories of such things as rememberings. His method is direct and intuitive. All of the 'contents of the mind' are divided into 'impressions' and 'ideas' by Hume, and he does not make Locke's mistake of differentiating them in terms of their respective sources, say, without and within. Rather mind is built up of impressions which depend for their recognition on the 'intensity' with which they appear to the subject. Without going further into this, and suspending the question of whether such an interpretation is valid or not, one can see how Husserl was led to call Hume the first phenomenologist, in so far as Hume described what appears in experience (1967, pp. 23 and 183).

Husserl shared Hume's and Brentano's conception of psychology, in one shape or form, as the 'queen' of the sciences. But he argued that, as one natural science among many, psychology could not occupy such a pre-eminent position. The understanding of mind, must therefore take a distinctive form, which would serve equally as a basis for physics as for a natural scientific psychology. Husserl took it upon himself to outline this distinctive understanding of mind which could serve as the basis and the horizon of all natural scientific knowledge. As with all idealism, the Absolute beckoned Husserl on in his grandiose mission. And in his early works on arithmetic and logic he was beginning to evolve the notion of subjectivity, which was to inflate into the Absolute in his philosophy of trans-

cendental idealism.

Husserl wanted to create a philosophic study that would transcend the empiricist account of the nature of knowledge, and that would put into perspective, and give meaning to, the sciences based on objective empirical principles. This would have to be a study of subjectivity, of experience from the 'inside' as it were, but unlike Brentano and the later existentialists, Husserl wanted to study 'pure' subjectivity, uncontaminated by such incidentals as the fact that subjective consciousness has an existential situation 'in' a socially and organically differentiated being, called a Person. It is in this context that Husserl developed the two main concepts of his pure phenomenological period, the 'thesis of the natural attitude or standpoint' and the 'epoche, or phenomenological reduction'.

We will discuss these two concepts in turn and try to highlight what it was about them that led Husserl's followers to largely *ignore* pure phenomenology in their developments of phenomenological description, and which led Husserl himself *away* from his 'pure' researches into an attempt to demonstrate their relevance and application to the lived world, in his later philosophy.

First, then, we turn to the 'natural attitude or standpoint'. The 'natural standpoint' is the point of view that all of us cannot but adopt in the course of our everyday lives. It indicates that we must, and do, accept certain things as 'real' and indubitable in order to live and act in ordinary everyday life, and it describes these 'objectivities' which include values and aesthetic features, as well as facts and states of affairs, social facts as well as physical facts (ibid., pp. 101-7). It refers to the naive everyday realism embodied in our beliefs that in our world there are good paintings and bad ones, useful objects and useless ones, good weather and bad weather, good men and evil men, socially powerful men and socially powerless men. In this attitude these sorts of things are 'out there', their dependence on our judgement is ignored. We live in a world of objectivities which confront us, with which we have to deal and 'push our way through'—so as to speak—in pursuing our aims and acting intentionally. In the natural attitude there is not just this 'my world'. Rather I accept that there are many 'my worlds' besides my own, and each man believes as I do that he is one among many.

The natural attitude knows nothing of solipsism. We manipulate and pass between each other the 'same' physical object. We agree and disagree about the 'same' cultural object. Husserl does not develop his argument to the analysis of language and communication in the natural attitude. But even so he establishes a point that such an analysis would make more conclusively, which is that the world of natural attitude is, in a fundamental sense, taken to be an intersubjective or social one.

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By a movement in spatial location, each 'I' considers that, and acts on the assumption that, it is capable of having the 'same' environment of perceived physical objects and the 'same' perceived horizon as any other 'I'. Similarly, by empathy and imagination, each 'I' considers itself capable in principle of valuing things, in the 'same' way (whether morally, aesthetically or practically) and of having the 'same' environment of valued objects as any other 'I'. These are the *possibilities* that must be present if the world is to be meaningful for men as an 'intersubjective world'. As regards valued objectivities it is clearly possible for there to be such deep disagreement over their natures, that they may appear in the natural attitude as 'contested objectivities or realities'. A trivial example might be the Mona Lisa's smile, is it a beautiful or an ugly object? A more serious example might be a social object, thing or reality like a parliamentary system of government. In an historical situation where such a thing is both denounced and supported within a national society, as say in Germany during the rise of Hitler, then we have in the everyday attitude of Germans, besides the awareness of the system as a 'good' or 'bad' thing, also the awareness that it is a 'contested' thing, which involves the possibility of it ceasing to exist, and of it being made to cease to exist.

The social 'objects', social 'realities', have an often contested, and always perspectival 'existence', in the eyes and minds of different men in the natural attitude. There is thus an ongoing practical problem of intersubjectivity in the natural attitude. And, as we will see (chapter 9 below), this practical problem, the everyday social construction of social reality through men's thought, action and talk has increasingly become a focus of interest for sociologists, particularly ethnomethodologists. Husserl, however, never really addressed this problem of intersubjectivity. But he did address, without in any way solving, the problem of intersubjectivity that his own epoche method generated at the transcendental or reduced level.[5] We will look at the trap of solipsism, into which the absolute or pure ego falls, a little closer later, and also at Husserl's increasing emphasis on the natural attitude or Lebenswelt in his later philosophy. (Although this change of emphasis always remained within the suspect solipsism of the pure phenomenological point of view.)[6] But in his earlier preoccupation with pure phenomenological, for and in itself, Husserl was only interested in the 'natural attitude' as the quickly disposed of foil of the pure phenomenological 'epoche'; we will now briefly outline what is meant by this concept.

In the epoche the philosopher attempts to suspend his naive belief in the natural attitude (ibid., pp. 107-12). He puts the 'real' world of objects, instruments, values and people 'between brackets'; he puts them 'out of play' and attempts to do without them in his

subsequent investigation of consciousness. Schutz expressed the relation between the natural attitude and the epoche well, when he called the former a 'suspension of doubt' and the latter a 'suspension of belief' (1962, pp. 229). In each case it is not so much a question of denying, but of ignoring and doing without, doubt and belief respectively.

As a way of 'getting back to basics' it might be argued that Descartes had forshadowed Husserl with his method of systematic doubt until one reached the indubitable 'I think/doubt, therefore I am, the "cogito".' Husserl recognised a considerable debt to Descartes, more than to Hume and Kant, even calling one of his best known works, *Cartesian Meditations*. But he was clear to distinguish his method from that of Descartes, which he did not think was radical or sustained enough as a philosophical project (1960a, 1969; p. 227). One must go further, suspending the 'fact' that 'I am', and that it is the concrete self 'I' who thinks; one must ground the 'cogito' itself as a pure possibility generated by the meaning-constituting activity of transcendental subjectivity, the realm of 'absolute being' (1967, p. 153), of Truth and the (Platonic) essences.

The epoche is a method of coming to terms with the fact that 'reality in itself', the 'objective world out-there', is without significance, unsignified, meaningless apart from man's conscious attention to it. This holds for social 'reality' just as fundamentally as it does for 'logical objectivities', and more than it does for material reality, although Husserl mainly confined himself to the latter two.

In epoche, the brute existence of a blossoming tree is ignored—its meaningless aspect is ignored—and we only deal with its meaningful aspects, those that are given to it, as it were, by consciousness. In doing this we are trying to grasp the essence of the phenomenon 'this blossoming tree'. A linguistic analogue of this procedure would be if we ignored the occurrence of the phrase, 'this blossoming tree' as part of a speech-act, and instead viewed the phrase from a different standpoint. We would concentrate on its grammatical structure, the references of the words and their function together as a phrase, within the sentence of which they are a part. We could 'think away' the occurrence of speech-acts altogether and still be left with phrases and sentence structures. Similarly, according to Husserl, we could 'think away' the existence of this blossoming tree altogether, destroy, it in our imagination, and still we would be left with a meaningful conception of the tree. This would be its essence or 'eidos', that which is essentially given in the experience of seeing the tree. When we come to Sartre it will be seen that there are other interpretations of the essential nature of perceptions. Sartre's account of being overwhelmed and sickened by the meaningless brute existence of a tree, in his novel *Nausea*, is a good example of the different concerns

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and interpretations of experience given by existential phenomenology compared with Husserl's pure phenomenology (1965b, p. 182).

Followers of Husserl, like Sartre, agreed with him that philosophical activity must be more and other than simply a parasitic analysis of the achievements, methods and logic of the natural sciences. The logical empiricist and positivist restrictions of philosophy were rejected by both of them, but in the name of different projects. Husserl's involved the quest for a 'higher science' of transcendental subjectivity, which would reveal the ground of logic, mathematics and theoretical science in the meaning-constituting activities of pure consciousness. For Husserl, these forms of knowledge were really only very sophisticated enclaves and dimensions of the natural attitude, which also incorporates, as we have already mentioned, our more naively realistic beliefs about the physical and social world. In his pure phenomenological stage Husserl uses a speculative philosophical method to reveal and analyse essences and 'essencing' activities. He is not interested in proceeding there by way of, or towards, a critique of science, which on the contrary he hopes to 'ground' and justify. His interest in the cruder, more vague and pervasive dimensions and enclaves of the natural attitude is minimal; he seems to think that any thinking man would in any case suspend their relevance, and he is not much interested thereafter in grounding and justifying the superficialities and trivia cluttering up common sense. As compared with this, Husserl's existentialist sociological followers have set themselves precisely the project of studying this 'clutter', and the everyday life which generates it, in close detail, and partly by means of a trenchant critique of natural scientific, empiricist and positivist claims and analogies. That is, they reject Husserl's transcendental project, together with all scientific and scientistic methods drawn from the sophisticated enclaves of the natural attitude, in order to study the natural attitude more or less on its own ground and in its own terms.

My case in this book is that conceptual analysts, following the later Wittgenstein, took a remarkably similiar view to these dissident Husserlians, given all of the differences in style between them; and that furthermore, both schools set themselves tasks that only humanistic sociologies like ethnomethodology can tackle. Both philosophical schools in their different ways, see a project and a method, a topic and a resource, in the lived world of the natural attitude. And both indicate that this project establishes a role, not only for philosophy, but for sociology also, and in particular for types of sociology that are at present regarded as unconventional, unnecessary and uninteresting by conventional sociology.

It is interesting to note, regarding conventional sociology, that the taxonomic 'theorist' Talcott Parsons, has had recourse to Husserl's

transcendental essentialism. He made use of Husserl's notion of the phenomenological essence of something being that which 'cannot be thought away' from the experience of the thing. Parsons wrote, in the *Structure of Social Action*, that what he called the 'action frame of reference' was 'the indispensable, logical framework in which we describe and think about the phenomena of action' (1937, p. 733). Thus it had what he called 'phenomenological status', in that it involved 'no concrete data that can be "thought away".' The 'essence' of action was thus alleged to be given in Parsons' analysis of 'the action frame of reference'. On the other hand, space and time cannot be thought away from any conception of the physical world. Thus the 'essence' of physical objects, the area of the natural sciences, was alleged to be given in any analysis of the 'spatio-temporal frame of reference'. The sciences of action are in this way distinguishable from the natural sciences, according to Parsons, and investigation in terms of the one framework necessarily involves the irrelevance of the other (ibid., p. 764).

It was a similar sort of position that the existential followers of Husserl endorsed when they demanded a critique of, and suspension of, natural science in order to see and study man's existential situation better, in a clearer light. With Parsons, they are prepared to make ontological-type assertions as to the basic nature and being of things given in and by consciousness, and are prepared to base their investigations and studies on such assertions. Husserl began from the natural attitude, and using his distinctive philosophical method, reached essentialist assertions. His followers and, perhaps unwittingly many social theorists, begin from essentialist assertions and work towards describing the natural attitude. In the previous section on Brentano it was noted that an important characteristic of the phenomenological school was its assertion that, at the very least, there exist Persons, and its analysis of the essential nature of personal existence, which implies an analysis of consciousness and of what it is to have bodily and social existence.

At the same 'untestable' level, various types of sociology have given us 'man the role-player', 'homo sociologicus' (Dahrendorf, 1968), 'other-directed man' (Riesman, 1950, ch. 1), 'animal symbolicus' (Schutz, 1962, p. 356), etc. Again, at the same level, conceptual analysis, influenced by the later Wittgenstein, has given us 'man the rule-governed actor' (Peters, 1958, p. 5), the language-game player (Wittgenstein, 1956, pp. 31-2 *passim*), the 'free actor' (Melden, 1967, pp. ix, 179, 213, etc.), the 'Person' (Strawson, 1959, ch. 3) and soon. All three forms of study utilise these ontological-level assertions and conceptions of the essential nature of man's existence,—whether in the mode of working hypotheses, ultimate bounds of sense, regulative principles of experience and concept

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formation or whatever—when they describe and investigate con-
crete examples of such existence. Later we must discuss the 'idea
of a social science' as propounded by logical empiricist philosophers
of science (see chapter 3 below). And further we must discuss the
relevance of this level of assertion in social science (see chapter 9
below, and chapter 7 and 8 *passim*). But preparatory to such dis-
cussions it is useful to know that two major philosophic schools are
themselves as deeply involved with such assertions, both implicitly
and explicitly, as sociology itself is in practice.

Enough has been said about Husserl's period of pure phenomen-
ology and its main concepts of (a) the natural attitude, (b) the method
of suspending this attitude, and (c) the realm of pure subjectivity
which one is supposed to reach as a result of the suspension. We can
now pass on to the final stage of Husserl's writing, where the difficulty
involved in reconciling anti-existential subjectivity with existential
personal subjectivity and intersubjectivity, produced further ambig-
uities and contradictions in his work.

The point of pure phenomenology was to show how all meaning
issues from pure transcendental subjectivity, and how all meanings
are constituted by consciousness. From this standpoint, having
grasped the essence of wordly realities by removing their existence
from them, we are in a position to allow existence back in again. The
latter was a stage that did not occupy much of Husserl's effort in
the period when he was developing the idea of a pure phenomenology,
but which came to be very important in his later work (1970a,
1960a; see also Ricoeur, 1967a, chapters 4 and 5). For here he tries to
build up and reconstitute the natural world, the world of the natural
attitude, having taken it apart to get to its foundations in pure
subjectivity. This would be a synthetic movement, as opposed to
the original analytic one. To use Sartre's dialectical terms, this
would be a 'progressive' as opposed to a 'regressive' movement
1963b, ch. 3), or to use Galileo's scientific terms it would be a 'com-
positive' as opposed to a 'resolutive' movement (see the discussion
of Husserl's and Carnap's methods in chapter 3 below).

But the question arises as to precisely how Husserl can recon-
stitute anything. All it seems that he can do is to restore existence,
where he had previously taken it away—to restore by philosopher's
fiat what he had taken away by philosopher's fiat. We can reasonably
hypothesise that the answer lies in the influence that Dilthey,
Heidegger and Lévy-Bruhl, the French anthropologist, came to
have on Husserl, and also in the pre-war environment of German
internal and international politics.[7] The former influence was an
intellectual one, convincing him that he had ignored the distinctive
nature of the 'human sciences' for too long. The latter influence was
a practical and moral one, convincing him that he had ignored his

own society, culture and history for too long.

Heidegger, his student, and Dilthey, with whom he corresponded, influenced him, if not to accept then at least to discuss man's being-there-in-the-world and man's spirituality, respectively. And the rise of Nazi irrationalism led Husserl to write about the 'crisis of Euro-pean man', which he saw as the failure of European rationalism, from its Greek philosophic beginning, to provide a scientific account of subjectivity and consciousness equal to its account of the natural world (1965; 1970a). Instead European thought had become lost in 'objectivism' and 'naturalism', and had allowed the success of natural sciences to obscure the possibility that a science of sub-jectivity and consciousness might take a radically different form from that which the natural sciences had taken. Because there had been no rational/scientific (in this widened sense) account of subjectivity and consciousness, a vacuum had been created which had filled up with irrationalist debris, according to Husserl. The Nazi ideology was such a piece of debris. The crisis of European man, on the intellectual level only, could only be resolved by determined efforts to provide the missing rational/scientific account of sub-jectivity and consciousness. Needless to say, Husserl was advocating the adoption of his own philosophic programme, an essentialist phenomenology of pure subjectivity.

Thus the critique of the 'natural attitude', which was outlined in the 'pure phenomenological' stage of Husserl's development, is superseded by a specific critique of the claims of natural science to exclusively embody the European tradition of rational thinking. Husserl now differentiates the 'natural attitude' and natural science, whereas before he placed them in the same category. This differen-tiation, as was mentioned above, was made quite explicit by Husserl's followers, who considered that they could suspend and criticise the natural sciences while still being able to study the world of the natural attitude. That Husserl eventually felt the need to make a similar differentiation, shows how inadequate and ambiguous was his portrayal of the 'natural attitude' in his 'pure phenomenological' stage.

Particularly, there was Husserl's ambiguity over what theory of knowledge he held to be implied by the 'natural attitude'. Was it the version of naive realism epitomised by sensationalistic empiricism Or was it the version of naive realism epitomised in historical and sociological empiricism that views all men as the creators of common practical and cultural objects? The first version must be phrased in the passive, received mode, while the second must be phrased in the active, creative mode. The first version builds up the intersubjective nature of the world from sensory inputs received by the individual sensor. The second version simply asserts, as its

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basic axiom, that the world is an intersubjective construction. Thus the first version asserts that the common world of everyday objects is a spatio-temporal world of things. Whereas the second version asserts that the common world of everyday objects is a meaningful world of things-as-instruments, other persons, social actions, social communication and social structures. There is a dichotomy between these two versions of naive realism which remained unexpressed in Husserl's earlier writings (see Husserl 1967) but which he began to express in his later writings.

Husserl effected this differentiation of two interpretations of the natural attitude, by introducing the concepts *Umwelt* and *Lebenswelt* —the environing world and the lived-in world—which he used interchangeably, to refer to the socio-cultural version of naive realism present in the natural attitude. The other version, the sensationalistic one, he characterised as the philosophic background to the natural sciences, against which the change from empirical generalisation to theoretical formalism in science must be seen.

Husserl's later work, particularly his thesis of the crisis in European thought (1965, 1970a), was put forward largely in terms of a contrast between the concepts involved in man's 'life-world' as against the concepts involved in the natural sciences. He was particularly keen to make the point that natural science itself is an activity engaged in by a community of men, adhering to certain common standards and norms. Thus that in so far as it fails to understand, in general, such common social activities and common social objects like norms, then it fails to understand its own nature. (That science is an enclave within the social and historical world is well shown by Kuhn (1970a)). To Husserl, natural science is 'lost' in the world of things, lost in its own objectivity and desire to 'be objective'. It can no longer view itself as one more activity-of-many-subjectivities among a world of such activities-in-common. Rather, it attempts to stand outside the 'life-world' and in amongst the material objects it spectates and correlates (1965, pp. 184-7).

But just as suspension of the natural attitude was originally Husserl's method of reaching 'pure subjectivity', so now his method of reaching the same realm of essences lies in suspending natural science while retaining and analysing man's 'life-world'. Husserl's followers saw that this attempt to salvage the original pure phenomenological project in the face of the new phenomenological project (to analyse and describe man's consciousness in-the-world) was ultimately a failure. Either the phenomenologist is oriented towards the essence, or he is oriented towards existence. He cannot be oriented towards both, (although Merleau-Ponty did claim to locate essence *in* existence (1962, p. vii)). Either the phenomenologist is concerned with impersonal transcendental subjectivity, or he is

concerned with socially and organically embodied personal sub-
jectivity. He cannot be concerned with both.

The phenomenologists who put this argument most strongly were
the French existentialist philosophers, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, to
whom we now turn. In a later section the extent to which Schutz
and Heidegger also helped in this weaning-off of the phenomeno-
logical school from Husserl's programme will be outlined.

Existential phenomenology

Sartre

So far, it has been seen that Brentano contributed the ideas of
'intentionality' of consciousness, and description of consciousness
to the phenomenological school, while Husserl contributed the
ideas of 'pure consciousness' (the transcendental realm of essences),
the 'epoche' of existence and the 'natural attitude' or the 'lived-world'.
Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, like Heidegger and Schutz, contributed
different versions of man's existential condition to the phenomeno-
logical school in a general reaction against Husserl's emphasis on
essence. Consciousness was no more to be thought of as some
Godhead, outside the world, painting the things in the world with
the meanings of Platonic essences. Now consciousness had an organic
embodiment and a social situation relative to other such entities,
in the writings of Sartre and the other post-Husserlians. Conscious-
ness *is* personal existence, not impersonal essence, as Husserl asserts.

Two of the main problems that confront a philosopher trying to
understand personal existence are the senses in which both the
personal Body defines the person, and in which Other Persons
define the person. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty devote a lot of their
writings to these problems and also to ways in which personal
consciousness transcends such definitions in ongoing life, revealing,
questioning and testing all limitations not only possibly in thought,
but necessarily in action. And this is the problem of Freedom which
so clearly characterises existentialist writings.

As regards Sartre, it could well be objected that the 'phenomeno-
logical ontology' that he sets out in *Being and Nothingness* (first
published 1943) is proposed on a very transcendental level. For
instance, Sartre pictures 'Nothingness', or consciousness, as a
completely impersonal stream of creativity in which all human beings
participate. In an earlier critical analysis of Husserl's concept of
transcendental subjectivity (1962c), Sartre set out to show that
Husserl's epoche revealed a 'transcendental ego'. It did not reveal
an ego-less conception of the being of consciousness, as Sartre
thought it should have. In other words there is a case for interpreting

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Husserl and Sartre in completely the opposite way from the general way I want to interpret them here. It could be said that far from having an impersonal conception of consciousness at the transcendental level, Husserl has an ego-logical conception. And it could be said that, far from having a personal conception of consciousness at the transcendental level, Sartre has an explicitly impersonal one.

The way of dealing with this objection is simply to point to the philosophic work that each philosopher put his ideas to. Husserl worked at the transcendental level, while Sartre has worked mainly at the existential level. If Husserl talked of a 'transcendental ego' then it explicitly had no bearing whatsoever on the existentially situated entity 'person', 'self', 'me', or 'ordinary ego'. Sartre's work, on the other hand, has a bearing precisely on the existential person (see also his criticisms of Kant's transcendentalism, 1966, p. 276). He puts his conception of Nothingness, of transcendental ego-less consciousness, the impersonal stream of spontaneity manifested in every person, to work in the effort to understand human existence and life. In fact he gives his terms so many applications to concrete examples, particularly by tying the Nothingness to Freedom and responsibility, both moral notions, that the original transcendental interpretation of the terms almost becomes redundant and irrelevant: 'One must be conscious in order to choose, and one must choose in order to be conscious. Choice and consciousness are one and the same thing' (1966, p. 565). In connection with this Spiegelberg writes: 'It is this tacit dropping out of the transcendental dimension and the implied humanisation or "mundanisation" of consciousness which constitutes the most significant change in Sartre's version of Husserlian phenomenology' (1969, p. 481). It is in the light of this development in Sartre's philosophy towards analysis of consciousness in terms of personal existence that we must view his analysis, in *Being and Nothingness*, of consciousness as the abstraction—the 'for-itself'.

The point that needs to be made concerning the style of post-Husserlian phenomenologists like Sartre is that they did not give up the claim to make essentialist metaphysical statements, but unlike Husserl they did not regard this kind of statement as the goal of philosophy which could only be attained by a specific reflective technique. Rather they derived such statements directly from descriptions of their own on-going non-reflective experience and immediately applied them and exemplified them in further descriptions of actual and conceivable real life experience.

Sartre's semi-autobiographical novel *Nausea* (1965b) relates the kinds of experience from which the ontological conceptions in *Being and Nothingness* arose, while the outline of an 'existential

psycho-analysis' in the latter work (1966, p. 696) shows the concern Sartre felt to relate these conceptions back to these realms of personal existence and experience from which they came.

The experience from which the ontological conception of Being as 'in-itself' is derived is well represented by the feelings which assail Roquentin, the 'narrator' in *Nausea*, when he sits contemplating a tree. He feels repelled and frightened by the absurd, unjustifiable, unknowing solid existence that the tree has. And then it appears that all of the things that confront him share completely this same form of existence, and thus that their individuality, as 'tree' or 'grass' or 'bench' is a façade which melts away to reveal them as being all the same 'stuff', 'soft, monstrous masses, in disorder' (1965b, p. 183).

Sometimes Sartre refers to the form of being in-itself that this exemplifies in anthropomorphic terms, so that it 'threatens', 'seduces' or 'resists' us. Partly this is merely Sartre's over-emphatic imagination and exuberant style. And partly it is a device allowing us to see the co-existence of consciousness and things. That is, this is more than a mere repetition of Brentano's thesis that 'all consciousness is consciousness *of* something'. It pulls this thesis from the realm of definition into the realm of existence. It means that consciousness exists unfulfilled, and in a radically different way than that which fleetingly fulfills it. Consciousness exists as a lack, a nothing, an emptiness in the face of things which exist solidly and for no reason. It is not a matter of mere definition that you cannot have consciousness without there being an object of consciousness; according to Sartre it is a primary datum of our experience. But that does not mean that it is merely contingent and possible either; rather it is held to be a certain and absolute structure of existence. Sartre can refer to experience and talk of existence, and yet come away with certainties and absolutes in the way that no empiricist would when basing his arguments on experience and existence. This is why one has to be very careful in dealing with Sartre's formulae such as 'existence precedes essence' (1965a, p. 26), and with his rejection of Husserl's essentialism, because Sartre's analysis of existence is shot through with unsupported and unsupportable essentialist intuitions.

It is then something of a 'synthetic *a priori*' proposition for Sartre that consciousness arises in the face of things, and that it exists in a different way than things do. The nature of their co-existence is that of antithesis. Consciousness is precisely what being in-itself is not, and being-in-itself is precisely what consciousness is not. Moreover, consciousness 'wants to become' its opposite and so attain absolute self-sufficiency. Or, in more ethical terminology, Sartre sometimes puts this idea as that consciousness wants to escape

from its nature and become thing-like, in bad faith and self-deception. On the other hand, being-in-itself is represented in the anthropomorphic postures of threatening and seducing consciousness, its opposite. But while it is in the nature of at least one of these co-existent modes of being to want to be like the other one, it is also in their essential nature that this is impossible. The result is a picture of the Cartesian Mind-Matter dichotomy cast in the form of an Hegelian dialectic that is eternally fated to have no synthesis.

The revelation of the being of consciousness and the being of matter arose from an experience which, it is reasonable to assume, is not a very common experience among people in general, and not a very regularly recurring experience among those afflicted few, in particular. Sartre does not like to remain at this kind of distance from ordinary life experiences for too long, as can be seen in any of his philosophical writings by the number of concrete examples he illustrates his arguments with (and sometimes loses them in). The third form of being which occupies a considerable amount of space in *Being and Nothingness* is attested to by much more common experiences, and that is what he calls 'being-for-others'.

'Being-for-others' is simply the awareness I have that I am seen as body by other people. It is an awareness and a form of experience common to all men, and is exemplified in awareness of the gaze of others at oneself, leading in some cases to experiences of timidity, shyness and anxiety and in other cases to efforts at conforming to the picture that others hold of oneself. Sartre calls this an 'ontological dimension' on a par with 'being-for-itself and 'being-in-itself'. In a sense it is one of the main areas where the grand ontological struggle between the latter two dimensions is enacted. Whereas Sartre's picture of inanimate being 'threatening' and 'seducing' consciousness was set out in unjustifiably anthropomorphic terms, his later picture of the gaze of others threatening consciousness is a little more justifiable. He speaks of the 'profound truth' that lies in the myth of Medusa's gaze which turned men to stone (1966, p. 525).

While personal existence, or personal consciousness need not become a thing merely by co-existing as a no-thing among things, it is conceivable that it could become a thing by co-existing with the Medusa-like influences of other people. This possibility is more clearly seen if we give personal existence/consciousness the interpretation Sartre preferred to stress as he developed his argument in *Being and Nothingness*, that is as absolute freedom. 'I am free to think any thought I choose'. If we extend this formula from thought to action we get, 'I am free to act in any way that I choose'. And if my actions define the person that I am, then we get, 'I am free to choose myself, the person that I am'. Sartre rounds off this line of

interpretation by adding that I am 'condemned' to this absolute freedom, this absolute choosing. Becoming 'thing-like' is something of an abstraction, but losing choice and freedom is an interpretation of that abstraction which we can understand a lot more directly.

On the level of his earlier ontological analysis, being-in-itself by its mere presence threatened to transmute being-for-itself into being-in-itself. But in the light of the introduction of being-for-others and the concept of being-for-itself as personal freedom it now appears that the presence of others is the main threat. Whereas ultimately it is physically impossible to become a thing like a stone, it is quite socially and experientially possible for a person to become the thing that others want him to be. This is a social interpretation of reification which refers to a real process, as opposed to the physical interpretation of reification which could never be more than a metaphor. And it came to be used increasingly by Sartre as the paradigm for the existential threats with which personal consciousness has to contend.

His social philosophy is, if you like, a philosophy of anti-sociality. 'Hell is others' (1947). I have to struggle with the other to keep my own consciousness and freedom which he wants to turn into his objects. Similarly he has to struggle against my invasion of his life and liberty. Sartre's pessimistic dialecticism has taken another turn.

On this point Sartre takes issue with Heidegger, who proposed that Others are revealed to us 'being-with' us, in community with us (*Mitsein*), at the most basic ontological level (1966, p. 522). If this primordial community is given in the term 'Us', then Sartre asserts we are implying the existence of a third entity whose gaze at us constitutes us as the 'us-object'. Two men fighting become 'us' in the presence of a third man. All of humanity becomes 'us' in the presence of God. At best then this is a secondary and not a primordial form of community. On the other hand, if this community is given in the term 'We', or 'we-as-subject', Sartre asserts that this implies an 'undifferentiated transcendence' which could not account for the reality of individual, distinct, personal existences. The only kind of personal reality it could account for would be that of the completely anonymous and interchangeable personalities that, in modern society, are the objects of mass advertising, mass transport and mass government. If the 'we-subject' implies the concrete 'we-who-stand-in-a-bus-queue', or the 'we-who-buy-cigarettes', then Heidegger has succeeded only in defining pseudo-community.

So according to Sartre the experience of being *with* other people 'has no value as a metaphysical revelation' (ibid., p. 523), rather it is the experience of being *against* other people that has metaphysical value, revealing one of the basic ontological dimensions. The essence of the relationship between consciousness is not *Mitsein*; it is