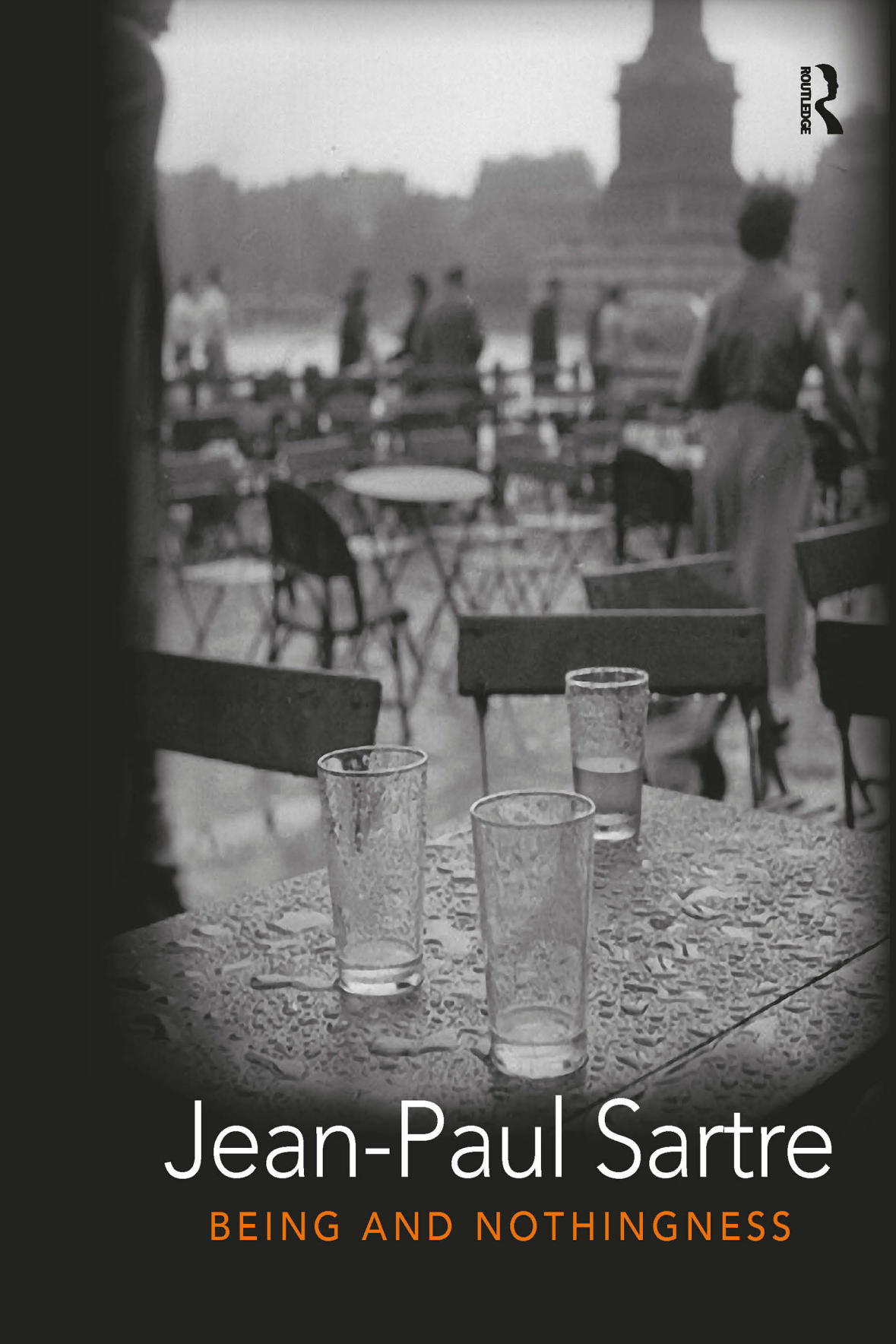


A black and white photograph of a Parisian café scene. In the foreground, a table with a patterned tablecloth holds three condensation-covered glasses. In the background, people are seated at outdoor tables, and a large building with a dome is visible across a body of water.

Jean-Paul Sartre

BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

Being and Nothingness

First published in French in 1943, Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant* is one of the greatest philosophical works of the twentieth century. In it, Sartre offers nothing less than a brilliant and radical account of the human condition. The English philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch wrote to a friend of "the excitement – I remember nothing like it since the days of discovering Keats and Shelley and Coleridge". This new translation, the first for over sixty years, makes this classic work of philosophy available to a new generation of readers.

What gives our lives significance, Sartre argues in *Being and Nothingness*, is not pre-established for us by God or nature but is something for which we ourselves are responsible. At the heart of this view are Sartre's radical conceptions of consciousness and freedom. Far from being an internal, passive container for our thoughts and experiences, human consciousness is constantly projecting itself into the outside world and imbuing it with meaning. Combining this with the unsettling view that human existence is characterized by radical freedom and the inescapability of choice, Sartre introduces us to a cast of ideas and characters that are part of philosophical legend: anguish; the "bad faith" of the memorable waiter in the café; sexual desire; and the "look" of the other, brought to life by Sartre's famous description of someone looking through a keyhole.

Above all, by arguing that we alone create our values and that human relationships are characterized by hopeless conflict, Sartre paints a stark and controversial picture of our moral universe and one that resonates strongly today.

This new translation includes a helpful Translator's Introduction, a comprehensive Index and a Foreword by Richard Moran, Brian D. Young Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University, USA.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was one of the great philosophers of the twentieth century and a renowned novelist, dramatist, and political activist. As a teenager Sartre was drawn to philosophy after reading Henri Bergson's *Time and Free Will*. He passed the *agrégation* in philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1929. His first novel *La Nausée*, which Sartre considered one of his best works, was published in 1938. Sartre served as a meteorologist in the French army before being captured by German troops in

1940, spending nine months as a prisoner of war. He continued to write during his captivity and, after his release, he published his great trilogy of novels, *Les Chemins de la Liberté*. In 1964, Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature but declined it. During the events of 1968 he was arrested for civil disobedience but swiftly released by President Charles de Gaulle, who allegedly said “one does not arrest Voltaire”. He died on 15 April 1980 in Paris, his funeral attracting an enormous crowd of up to 50,000 mourners. He is buried in the Cimetière du Montparnasse in Paris.

Translated by Sarah Richmond, University College London, UK.

“Sarah Richmond’s marvellously clear and thoughtful new translation brings Sartre’s rich, infuriating, endlessly fertile masterpiece to a whole new English-language readership.”

Sarah Bakewell, author of *At the Existentialist Café*

“Sartre’s philosophy will always be important. *Being and Nothingness* is not an easy read but Sarah Richmond makes it accessible in English to the general reader. Her translation is exemplary in its clarity.”

Richard Eyre

“Sarah Richmond’s translation of this ground-zero existentialist text is breathtaking. Having developed a set of brilliant translation principles, laid out carefully in her introductory notes, she has produced a version of Sartre’s magnum opus that – finally! – renders his challenging philosophical prose comprehensible to the curious general reader and his most compelling phenomenological descriptions and analyses luminous and thrilling for those of us who have studied *Being and Nothingness* for years.”

Nancy Bauer, Tufts University, USA

“This superb new translation is an extraordinary resource for Sartre scholars, including those who can read the work in French. Not only has Sarah Richmond produced an outstandingly accurate and fluent translation, but her extensive notes, introduction, and editorial comments ensure that the work will be turned to for clarification by all readers of Sartre. All in all, this is a major philosophical moment in Sartre studies.”

Christina Howells, University of Oxford, UK

“A new translation of *Being and Nothingness* has been long overdue. Sarah Richmond has done an excellent job of translating and clarifying Sartre’s magnum opus, making its rich content accessible to a wider audience.”

Dan Zahavi, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

“With its scholarly introduction, up-to-date bibliography and numerous footnotes, Richmond’s fluent and precise translation will be an indispensable tool even for scholars able to read Sartre in French.”

Andrew Leak, University College London, UK

“This fine new translation provides us with as crisp a rendering as possible of Sartre’s complex prose. Richmond’s introduction, and a panoply of informative notes, also invite readers to share with her the intricacies of the task of translation and assist in grasping many of the conceptual vocabularies and nuances of this vital text.”

Sonia Kruks, author of *Simone de Beauvoir and
the Politics of Ambiguity*

Being and Nothingness

An Essay in Phenomenological
Ontology

Jean-Paul Sartre
Translated by Sarah Richmond

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FOREWORD

Richard Moran

With this new translation by Sarah Richmond, Sartre's major work *L'Être et le Néant* is available to the English-speaking world as never before. Not only is the translation itself a great improvement in accuracy and readability on the Hazel Barnes version published in 1956, but the Translator's Introduction and Notes on the Translation illuminate this difficult text for both earlier readers of Sartre and those encountering this book for the first time. The inadequacies of the Barnes translation have been widely recognized for a long time, but it is always difficult to launch a new translation of a well-known work that is still selling, and in this case the scope of the task was especially daunting. The world of philosophy in English has reason to be grateful to Richmond and the people at Routledge for seeing this through.

*** **

Jean-Paul Sartre was born in 1905 in Paris. He had already published a few short stories when he entered the *École Normale Supérieure* in 1924, where he met Simone de Beauvoir, who remained a companion for life and whose influence on *Being and Nothingness*, while difficult to determine, was no doubt considerable. Like most young French philosophers at the time, he was influenced by the work of Henri Bergson

and by the neo-Kantianism represented by Léon Brunschvicg, but he had already conceived for himself the dream of a manner of writing that would be literary and philosophical at once. It was in 1932 that he had the famous meeting in a café with Raymond Aron, when Aron was back visiting Paris during the year he was spending at the Institut Français in Berlin, learning about the new philosophy called “phenomenology.” As Beauvoir tells the story in *The Prime of Life*,

We ordered the specialty of the house, apricot cocktails. Aron said, pointing to his glass: “You see, my dear fellow, if you were a phenomenologist, you could talk about this cocktail glass and make philosophy out of it.” Sartre turned pale with emotion at this. Here was just the thing he had been longing to achieve for years – to describe objects just as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process.¹

Aron helped Sartre obtain a fellowship in Berlin for the following year, where he immersed himself in Husserl and Heidegger, and wrote his critique of Husserl, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, and the bulk of his first novel *Nausea* (published respectively in 1937 and 1938). Both works attracted considerable attention, but Sartre’s budding fame was cut short by the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the general mobilization in France. Sartre was called up and was captured by the Germans in 1940 and transferred to a prisoner-of-war camp in Trier. He does not describe his time there as having been harsh, and he seems to have spent most of his days teaching philosophy to fellow prisoners and working on the voluminous notebooks in which he sketched out the plan for his big book *Being and Nothingness*. After managing to get himself released in 1941, he returned to occupied Paris, where he sought unsuccessfully to form a resistance group independent of the Gaullists and the Communists. For the remainder of the war he was by his own account an “intellectual resistant,” and concentrated on finishing his magnum opus. It was published by Gallimard in 1943, at 722 pages weighing precisely one kilogram, which

1 Simone de Beauvoir (1962), *The Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p. 135.

(if Jean Paulhan is to be believed) helped with the initial sales, since the book was being used as a weight measure at home when the normal brass weights had been confiscated by the German authorities.

What sort of book is this, and what is its philosophical importance now? Any account of its importance and genuine brilliance has to come to grips with the several different forms of obstacle to its reception today, both those intrinsic to the book and those stemming from the contemporary intellectual context. Part of the problem is simply Sartre's own fame and the cultural saturation that was part of the reception of "existentialism" in France from the beginning. In the Paris of the 1950s something called "existentialism" was not merely a school of philosophy but an entire lifestyle, encompassing literature, music, film and a succession of political stances. This broad influence was amplified by the fact that, in France as elsewhere, the post-war years were also the beginning of the first age of mass media and a new prominence of "youth culture" in European and American life. Sartre's own personality as *provocateur* and *intellectuel engagé* lent itself to this context. He was on television almost as soon as television came to France, and was perhaps the first major philosopher to have his own radio show. In the decades following the war in France he was rarely without an opinion or an opportunity for publishing it. And of course he threw himself into the various political crises of his day, creating a certain notoriety and gaining enemies among both the Catholic right and the Communist left in France. The result of this cultural saturation is that today everyone is entitled to an opinion about Sartrean existentialism, however minimal one's exposure to his writing may be. This presence as cultural reference is itself unusual for a philosopher, and is an aspect of how his enduring fame is maintained even by his detractors. All philosophers wax and wane in their influence, and most can enjoy a posthumous existence in comfortable obscurity, but Sartre stands out among the notable twentieth-century philosophers for the extent to which he is still invoked for condescension, seen less as a philosopher than as a provocation to be put down both in intellectual circles and in the popular media.

Another obstacle is the sheer length and the style of *Being and Nothingness*. It can be an impossible and infuriating text; one can only dream wistfully of what a ruthless editor might have been able to do with its bulk. The tone is often abrupt and peremptory, with little or no explanation given to key philosophical terms, whether German or French. In a manner that

we have become used to among certain philosophers, it is as though the presumed audience for the work could only be those for whom such things as the distinction between “the phenomenon of being and the being of the phenomenon” is always already quite familiar, and we are being invited to appreciate the unexpected spin the brilliant author is putting on these old ideas. It is extremely uneven as a piece of philosophical writing. Sometimes we do indeed get what look very much like arguments, powerful ones, and other times Sartre puts his powers of description to genuinely illuminating use, but too often we get bold declarations, invidious distinctions, and a fondness for paradoxical formulation that seems to know no bounds.

Sartre himself paid a price for the difficulty of access of *Being and Nothingness*, in the fact that readers who were curious but not prepared to take on the 722 pages of the original had available to them a much shorter Sartrean text, a pamphlet really, called “Existentialism is a Humanism,” something dashed off and never intended for publication in the first place. In October 1945, in the early months of the Liberation, Sartre was persuaded by a friend to give what was to be a small public lecture on the new philosophy at the Club Maintenant. It turned into a huge event, with an overflow crowd and people being carried out after having fainted from the heat and overcrowding. Sartre spoke without notes. To help pay for the rental of the hall and the damage to the premises, the organizer prevailed upon Sartre to agree to publish a version of his remarks for sale, which he agreed to. As a text it is full of crudities, misstatements and willful exaggerations for effect, and soon became far and away the most famous and widely read piece he ever wrote. It is still commonly cited as representative of Sartrean existentialism by philosophers who should know better. A final obstacle to be mentioned is that so much of French thought since the 1960s and 1970s has proceeded from an assumed repudiation of Sartre. *Being and Nothingness* is, among other things, the last great expression of the “philosophy of the subject” that later French thought has expended so much energy in dismantling and decentering. Both structuralist (originally in the person of Claude Lévi-Strauss) and post-structuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan begin by repudiating the Cartesian starting point of so many of the reflections in *Being and Nothingness*, as well as Sartre’s appropriation of phenomenology and early Heidegger.

All of this is further reason to welcome this new translation and the opportunity it gives readers in English to encounter this book with fresh eyes, for despite its flaws it is still one of the great and engaging texts of twentieth-century philosophy. It is a text to struggle with, yes, but when the writing is at its best it is rewarding and illuminating in ways that few major works of philosophy in the modern world can touch. Of course like any philosophical text it needs to be comprehended as a whole, but many of its famous sections (on bad faith, on the look of the Other, on various self-defeating strategies of love and desire, on freedom and responsibility, on the “existential psychoanalysis” of qualities) can be profitably read by themselves. Today it is easy to forget how daring this text is, and the different ways Sartre expanded the possible forms of philosophical writing. This new edition makes this available to a new generation of readers.

Different philosophers will have different reasons for engaging with *Being and Nothingness* today. From the perspective of the history of philosophy it may be read as a remarkably ambitious attempt to inherit the phenomenology of Husserl and the early work of Heidegger, in the context of a general metaphysical picture of the world and the place of human thought and action within it. Today one may be skeptical about the very idea of such a general metaphysical picture, and in particular the dualism of “being as such” and “nothingness,” and yet still be impressed with the creative use to which it is put and how Sartre is able to begin from these bare categories to an analysis of the difference between the categories of ordinary objects (“being-in-itself”) and the categories of human life (“being-for-itself”). Despite rumors to the contrary, the idea of “nothingness” here has little to do with despair or the contemplation of suicide. Rather, the idea of the negative is bound up with the most basic abilities to describe the world and pick out and discriminate objects themselves (Sartre never tires of alluding to Spinoza’s formulation “*Omnis determinatio est negatio*”). At the same time the fundamental power of thought to negate, to assert difference, is also something that he seeks to derive from Husserl’s basic thought about consciousness (itself an idea associated with Brentano): consciousness is pure relatedness to an object, which is to say something other than itself, something it is not. Consciousness just is this basic capacity for relatedness to the world and the distinguishing of itself from the world

it is directed upon. This assertion of difference is described as part of the “nihilating” action of consciousness, which enables Sartre to forge his unbreakable connection between consciousness (as “for-itself”) and freedom, in action and in thought. For in the same way that a picture of the world as consisting purely of “positive reality” cannot account for the ability to grasp or even perceive the “negative” truth of, for instance, an object’s being fragile (breakable, but not broken), or different from another one, or no longer what it once was (not to mention Pierre’s absence from the café), so understanding human action requires the “negative” modes of thought involved in being underway with an action not yet completed, and in the capacity to step back from or “posit one’s freedom” with respect to one’s currently constituted motives and one’s past (one’s “facticity”). The “stepping back” or “putting one’s past out of play” is the same nihilating capacity of consciousness, the capacity to distinguish, hold oneself separate from the facticity of what the world has made of one so far, and raise the question for oneself of how one is to relate oneself to this positive reality from here on. It is along these lines that we can see that some of Sartre’s most provocative formulations are no mere paradox-mongering: The human being “is what it is not” (in the sense that, as agent, I am my relation to my unrealized possibilities, the action I am embarked on but have not completed) and “is not what it is” (in the sense that in adopting the standpoint of freedom to my possibilities I posit my difference from my past and the facticities of my situation, which make up what I am so far).

Here as elsewhere Sartre’s borrowings are as undeniable as the boldness and originality of his use of them. Are the notions of “negation,” “nothingness” and “difference” being stretched here to do too many different kinds of work as we move from the more purely metaphysical structure of the world to the story of action and human subjectivity? No doubt that is a question one may and should press throughout the reading of *Being and Nothingness*, but what remains impressive is the richness and diversity of the phenomenon that Sartre manages in this way to bring into philosophical contact with each other, the new questions this orientation makes possible. The same vaulting ambition that takes him from the ancient Parmenidean problem of how there can be “thought about what is not,” to the object-directedness of thought (“intentionality”), to a distinctive perspective on human freedom is also what helps us

formulate new questions about how the appeal to freedom can be genuinely explanatory of human action, and how we should understand the relation between the intentionality of thought and the intentionality of action, and hence the understanding of action itself as a form of thought.

Being and Nothingness is not only about human freedom, but is a text that is plainly *obsessed* with the question of freedom and its meaning, and organizes all its many topics around it. In relation to freedom it is less concerned to solve the traditional problem of freedom and determinism and more concerned to understand what is contained in the ordinary assumption of human freedom and the variety of ways it manifests itself. Part of Sartre's great originality here is in his drive to find the question of freedom not only in, say, the conditions for holding people accountable, but virtually everywhere in human life, in the inescapability of some answer I give to how I relate myself to my past as well as my future, to the forms of intersubjectivity and what it is that is aimed at in seeking the desire or recognition of another person, in the conflicting demands of the first-person and third-person points of view in understanding oneself. What is sometimes criticized as the unboundedness of Sartre's conception of human freedom is a reflection of the fact that the place of freedom in his system is less that of a human capacity among others and more that of a principle of intelligibility of human affairs quite generally.

Sartre is of course a novelist and playwright as well as philosopher, and part of the originality of *Being and Nothingness* as a piece of writing lies in the combination of an abstract and austere metaphysical picture with an essentially dramatic sense of the source of philosophical questions as they exhibit themselves in recognizable human situations. One of his great topics is that of the question of the forms of comprehensibility of human life, and of an individual human life taken as a whole (especially in his later books on Genet and Flaubert). He is properly and profitably struck by the contradictory demands we place on the comprehensibility of human life and action, and by the question of the priority of different forms of comprehensibility we demand of ourselves and others. The metaphysics of the in-itself and the for-itself, or the self-as-facticity and the self-as-transcendence, will have earned its philosophical keep if they are what bring into view and make available for thought what Sartre takes up in the sections of *Being and Nothingness* on bad faith, on the nature of shame

and the self-consciousness that pertains to it, on the encounter with the Other through “the look,” on the internal conflicts of love and desire.

Despite how long *Being and Nothingness* has been a looming presence on the philosophical scene, much of it is only recently getting the attention it deserves in the anglophone world. Sartre’s long chapter on “The body” is one of the first extended philosophical meditations in the modern era on that meaning of one’s identity with a certain living body, and is beginning to attract new attention today. And his reflections on the different forms of self-consciousness (“thetic” or “positional” versus “non-thetic” or “non-positional,” as originally developed in his short work *The Transcendence of the Ego*) are entering into contemporary discussions on the nature of self-knowledge and the first-person point of view. In many ways, Sartre is as present on the scene as ever, but even in that presence we can see him still struggling with his fame, and his life and personality somehow continue to exert a fascination out of balance with attention to the works that are supposedly the reason for any special interest in the details of this man’s life. With new biographies of Sartre appearing every few years, and words like “existential” being part of every pundit’s vocabulary, this new translation makes this an opportune time to go back to the source and see what it’s all about.

NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

BN Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (unless otherwise stated, reference is to the present translation).

EN Jean-Paul Sartre (1943), *L'Être et le Néant* (Paris: Gallimard) (i.e. the original French text of *Being and Nothingness*).

EH Jean-Paul Sartre (1973), *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen).

Note: The marginal pagination in the present translation corresponds to the pagination in the Gallimard Collection Tel edition of *L'Être et le Néant*, as published in 1976.

Footnotes: In the present translation, Sartre's notes have been labelled 'Sartre's note' and those written by the translator labelled 'TN' (Translator's Note).

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Sarah Richmond

L'Être et le Néant is widely and correctly regarded as Sartre's most important philosophical work, but it attracted little public attention when it first appeared in France in 1943. Perhaps we should not be surprised, as the Second World War was not yet over and the German Occupation was still in force in Northern France. Today, the place of *Being and Nothingness* (hereafter BN¹) within the canon of twentieth-century European philosophy is uncontested, and it is taught, read and studied across the globe.

In this Introduction my primary aim is to describe BN's philosophical impact so far, focusing especially on France and the English-speaking world. As a great deal of Sartre criticism and exegesis is now available, I will only briefly survey the content of the text. Instead I offer an overview of its reception, to provide the reader with some background to my translation, produced three-quarters of a century later. For remarks about the practical task of translating it, challenges it has posed, and my reasons for some of my decisions, see the Notes on the Translation.

At the time of BN's first publication, Sartre had returned to teaching philosophy in the French secondary school system, after an uneventful stint of military service (his poor eyesight meant he was exempt from active combat) and a period spent in a German prisoner-of-war camp. Although

1 I will use EN only when the reference is necessarily to the French version of the text.

XX TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Sartre had published some impressive work in the 1930s, he was not yet well known, and his reputation as a writer was owed primarily to his 1938 novel (*La Nausée*), some short stories and plays (*Les Mouches* was first staged in Paris in 1943), book reviews (mostly of fiction) published in various periodicals, and other journalism. A year later, after Pathé had commissioned him to write the screenplay for a feature film (*Typhus*, which was never made), Sartre believed he could earn a living as a full-time writer and gave up his teaching post. Not long after that – following his legendary public lecture (subsequently translated as EH) in which Sartre presented a simplified version of his philosophy to a packed audience in Paris in 1945 – he became a national figure. By the 1960s Sartre's further writings, his association with Simone de Beauvoir, his appearances around the world and his numerous political interventions had also made him an international figure, a 'public intellectual' who is frequently described as the most famous philosopher of the twentieth century.

BN presents itself as a traditional, scholarly and comprehensive work of philosophy. Sartre had not yet detached himself from the values of academia, and he adopts the persona of a distinguished professor who has the entire Western philosophical corpus at his fingertips. 'Modern thought', he tells us in his opening sentence, has '[reduced] the existent to the series of appearances that manifest it'. How, if at all, do statements of this highly abstract kind bear any relation to the doctrines and slogans that we associate with existentialist philosophy?

In fact, as readers are sometimes surprised to discover, the term 'existentialist' is applied only retrospectively to the philosophy of BN, and it does not figure in the text. It does figure importantly in EH, where Sartre sums existentialism up quite simply in the famous claim that 'existence comes before essence'. To explain this claim, Sartre (an atheist) contrasts it with a religious conception, according to which we are created by God. Had God created us, Sartre argues, our essence would precede our existence, as it would be determined by God's intentions. But there is no such thing as human nature in a godless world, where 'Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself'. This contrast seems to suggest that existentialism is incompatible with religious belief, which would conflict with Sartre's acknowledgement in the same lecture that Christian existentialism also exists, but we will not pursue this here.

The French title of EH – *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* – asserts the thesis that Sartre will be defending for his audience (and, once it was published, for his readers). *Being and Nothingness* is rather more obscure, and its sub-title – ‘An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology’ – is also unlikely to help anyone without a philosophical training. Ontology is the philosophical study of being – or of what exists, of what is – in the most general sense, and Sartre’s fundamental claim is elegantly condensed within his title. In order to account for *being*, Sartre is saying, we need also to acknowledge *nothingness* (or non-being). The relationship between this ontological project and the better-known ‘existentialist’ tenets that are associated with Sartre is in fact straightforward: the former provides the theoretical underpinnings for the latter. Nothingness explains why we humans are radically free, just as Sartre’s account in BN of the interpersonal orientation he calls ‘being for the Other’ explains why our interpersonal relationships are likely to be hellish.

The philosophy advanced in BN was of course attacked from the outset, in the first instance – and before it had been translated into any other languages – by Sartre’s fellow French intellectuals. Indeed, just two years after the publication of EN in France, Sartre announces in EH his intention to defend existentialism against several ‘reproaches’. Sartre is not too bothered by the censure of the ‘Christians’, for whom atheistic existentialism is incompatible with morality: the points Sartre goes on to make in the lecture are supposed to refute that claim. He would have been more troubled by the attacks from the political left. In a discussion of EH that was organized specifically for Sartre to face his opponents, the Communist activist Pierre Naville raised several criticisms that have often been repeated since. (Indeed, only a year or so later, Herbert Marcuse’s review of BN (Marcuse 1947) sounded a similar hostile Marxist note.) For Naville, Sartre’s rejection of ‘human nature’ was an illusion; rather than abolishing the idea, Sartre was regressively proposing an alternative to it, in the guise of human freedom. In more explicitly political terms, Naville also accused Sartre of ‘resurrecting liberalism’ (Sartre 1973: 60).

The next most significant date in the history of BN is probably 1956, in so far as Sartre’s international reputation as a philosopher depends – at least in the English-speaking world – on the first (and until now the only) English translation of EN, published in the US in that year. It was translated by Hazel Barnes (1915–2008), a Classics scholar at the

University of Colorado, who took on the task because she admired Sartre's philosophy and wanted to make it available to the anglophone world. Barnes's own work was also important in acquainting English speakers with Sartre's existentialism: much of her academic output, in the form of books and essays, took the form of critical discussion of his philosophy. And that was not all: Barnes also presented a series of programmes about philosophy on Ohio University radio in 1952, as well as a ten-episode television series about existentialism (screened on national American television) in the 1960s, entitled *Self-Encounter: A Study in Existentialism*. She even classified the memoir that she published in her eighties as a 'venture in Existentialist autobiography' (Barnes 1997).

These details alone suffice to show how radically the relations between intellectuals – both within and outside academic institutions – and the wider public culture have changed since the middle of the twentieth century. Sartre and Barnes had different personalities and intellectual outlooks, but they both believed that philosophy should concern itself with contemporary human existence, and that it should correct our understanding of our existence in a way that would oblige us to live differently. And people were hungry for these ideas, willing to attend public lectures or to learn more from the radio, newspapers and television. The philosophy of BN, with its emphasis on human freedom, agency and responsibility, may also have held special appeal for a post-war public open to change and desiring a fresh start.

The early reception of EN in the English-speaking world also illustrates an intellectual cosmopolitanism within academic philosophy that is less common in today's more specialized and professional departments. In the post-war period, the gulf within philosophy that is still often thought to separate Sartre, as a Continental philosopher, from the anglophone analytical traditions was not yet evident.

Moreover, and especially in the UK, the profile of the philosophers who showed an interest in Sartre's work – in some cases, even before it had been translated – is remarkable. A.J. Ayer, who was a French speaker and had friends in Paris, published a two-part discussion of Sartre's work in the journal *Horizon* in 1945, quoting lengthy passages from it in French. Iris Murdoch's first book was a slim volume on Sartre, published in 1953: although she focuses mainly on his novels, she had also read EN (and other non-fiction by Sartre) in French, and her book pays

particular attention to the way Sartre's philosophy influences his fiction. Later decades saw further contributions by other major British philosophers: Stuart Hampshire reviewed Barnes's translation in *The Observer* in 1957, while Alasdair MacIntyre wrote the entry on 'Existentialism' for the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* published in 1967. A few years later, MacIntyre also contributed to a collection of critical essays on Sartre edited by Mary Warnock (1971), another prominent Sartre scholar; this collection also included an excellent discussion by Hide Ishiguro of Sartre's theory of the imagination which helped to establish Sartre as someone worthy of attention from analytical philosophers of mind.²

Two lines of thought about Sartre's philosophy, which jointly exhibit a marked ambivalence, are especially prominent in this first wave of anglophone critical discussion. On the one hand – and as the legacy of Logical Positivism's hostility to traditional metaphysics would lead one to expect – there is a dismissive attitude towards Sartre's ontological framework. In his review articles, Ayer was particularly harsh about Sartre's assertions in relation to *le néant* ('nothingness'), which he judged to be 'literally nonsensical' (Ayer 1945: 19). (Although Ayer does not mention Rudolf Carnap, his criticism here bears a strong resemblance to Carnap's earlier criticism of Heidegger's concept of *das Nichts*, usually translated as 'nothing'; nor is this a historical coincidence, as Heidegger's concept influenced Sartre's.³) Similarly, in his *Observer* review of BN, Hampshire mentions the malignant influences of Hegel and Heidegger, and asks whether the 'sophistries of Hegelian logic' might conceal the banality of some of Sartre's observations – before conceding, in Sartre's favour,

2 Sartre's account of the imagination has also earned him a place within 'analytical' aesthetics. See for example Hopkins (1998). Another, much bigger, collection of papers appeared in the US a decade later: Schilpp (1981).

3 Isaiah Berlin, another influential figure in British philosophy at the time, was aware of Sartre's philosophy, although he never engaged with it in detail. (As Berlin was also centrally concerned with freedom, this was perhaps a missed opportunity.) In a letter written in 1955, Berlin reports: 'I have been reading, of all people, the detestable Sartre. The novels are too slimy & dark, but he is a very clever man & his moral philosophy is what I think I 3/4 believe. What a fool I was to be deceived by Freddie's articles in *Horizon* at the end of the war which concentrated on Sartre's obscure logic & his attitudes to sex & "proved" it all bogus. It is not. It is most imaginative and bold and important' (Berlin 2009: 467).

that his criticism of 'traditional theories of mind' is 'at too many points convincing for his whole system to be ignored' (Hampshire 1957: 16).⁴

On the other hand, British commentators also noted the congruence between Sartre's phenomenological approach to philosophy in BN (subtitled 'An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology') and the empiricist tradition in British philosophy. Iris Murdoch was especially alert to this similarity: 'It might even be argued that recent continental philosophers have been discovering, with immense fuss, what the English empiricists have known since Hume, whom Husserl himself claimed as an ancestor' (Murdoch 1967: 8).⁵

Sartre had studied the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) intensively in the 1930s: as he understood Husserl's phenomenological method, it directed philosophers to attend closely to humans' experience of the world, in order to describe 'the phenomena' (the way the world *appears* to human consciousness) in rigorous detail. In an early paper about Husserl published in 1939, Sartre's excitement about this revolutionary method was palpable.⁶ Along with two other German philosophers, Hegel and Heidegger, Husserl forms part of the trio – often referred to as the 'three Hs' – with whom Sartre enters into dialogue at various points in BN, usually in order to argue for the advantages of his view over theirs. As a fellow novelist-philosopher, Iris Murdoch was well placed to understand the appeal for Sartre – indeed, for anyone with literary ambitions – of Husserl's descriptive philosophical methodology. The often-quoted and highly evocative vignettes in BN (Pierre in the café, the woman on the date, the hiker who gives in to fatigue) show Sartre taking full advantage of the opportunity to indulge in the detailed and stylish elaboration of fictional characters and scenarios which, he thought, the phenomenological method provided. And, some years later, when Murdoch came to downgrade her earlier

4 By 'traditional theories of mind' Hampshire is referring to post-Cartesian conceptions. Sartre's relationship to Descartes is too complicated to discuss here.

5 Describing the reception of Sartre in the US, Ann Fulton suggests that a perceived affinity with empiricism – although in this case it was with William James's philosophy rather than Hume's – also helped to 'legitimize' Sartre's philosophy there (Fulton 1999: 3).

6 Sartre's early paper about Husserl is available in translation as Sartre (1970). For a readable account of Husserl's phenomenology and its relation to Sartre's concerns, see Bakewell (2016).

opinion of Sartre, she produced a competing vignette of her own (featuring 'M', a mother, and 'D', her daughter-in-law) to illustrate her criticisms of Sartre (Murdoch 1970).

In America it took longer for serious interest in Sartre's philosophy to become established: with a few exceptions, most philosophical discussion post-dated and depended on Barnes's translation.⁷ This time-lag seems also to have made it more difficult for Sartre's ideas to get an unprejudiced hearing: by the late 1950s Sartre was often presented outside France as a lightweight celebrity whose philosophy did not deserve to be taken seriously outside café society. Some of Sartre's critical articles about American society (written after a visit in 1945) had been translated into English in the 1950s; his increasingly vocal political criticisms of the West had also made him enemies.⁸ Apparently Hazel Barnes herself, before she had read any of Sartre's philosophical work, had dismissed existentialism as a 'fashionable philosophy of defeatism and despair' (Cannon 2008: 92).

The early reception of Sartre in the UK and the US was idiosyncratic in a number of ways. First, Sartre was often presented as a moral philosopher and, accordingly, criticized from that perspective. Both Murdoch and MacIntyre saw him this way while, in the US, Marjorie Grene presented existentialism as a philosophy in which the central 'virtue' was authenticity, a line of thought that was also taken up and

7 The exceptions are interesting, however. Wilfrid Desan, who was born in Belgium and studied in Lille, was a native French speaker who apparently met Sartre during the Second World War. He moved to the US in 1948, gained a doctorate there, and spent his working life as a university professor of philosophy. His first book, published in 1954, was a critical study of EN and relied on the French text (Desan 1954). Marjorie Grene, an American who had spent time studying in Germany with Heidegger and Jaspers in the early 1930s, published various books and papers about existentialism. The Canadian-born Robert Denoon Cumming served as a US soldier in France in the Second World War and spent time as a student at the Sorbonne. Although his own work on Sartre (Cumming 1991–2001) was only published later, he introduced generations of students to contemporary European thought in his classes at Columbia University. Herbert Marcuse, who emigrated from Germany in 1932, was already developing his new interpretation of Marxism when he published his unfavourable review of EN (Marcuse 1947).

8 Beauvoir also had an international name by now, as a controversial French intellectual. She visited America separately in 1947 and published her own ambivalent observations in France a year later (translated as Beauvoir 1999).

criticized by Charles Taylor. Alvin Plantinga's hostile 1958 paper, 'An Existentialist's Ethics', claimed Sartre's account of freedom was incompatible with any genuine morality and interpreted Sartre as a moral nihilist. From today's standpoint, and with the benefits of closer attention to BN as well as historical hindsight, this focus seems misguided. Sartre himself states explicitly at the end of BN (and in some important footnotes) that an adequate discussion of morality would have to appear in 'a future work', but he never succeeded in fulfilling that promise, although we have some idea of the evolution of his moral thinking from the posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics* (Sartre 1992).⁹ This moral perspective may have been encouraged to some extent by Barnes; although she was aware of Sartre's reticence in BN, her interest in Sartre was driven by her strong desire for a credible post-religious morality, a possibility she continued to explore in her academic writing. Many commentators also 'read back' into BN the optimistic moral ideas that Sartre had sketched out in EH, erroneously conflating these two texts.

More generally, the categories used within analytical philosophy and the tacitly accepted boundaries of the discipline have shaped the approach of anglophone philosophers to BN. For example, it is probably because Freud is rarely included (outside France) within the philosophical curriculum that Sartre's conception of existentialist psychoanalysis has largely been ignored while, on the other hand, his account of bad faith is seen as a contribution to the debate within the philosophy of mind about self-deception, and his account of shame is assessed with reference to the sceptical 'problem of other minds'.

In her introduction to the 1965 edition of her translation, Barnes complained that this 'piecemeal' attention to BN hindered readers' understanding:

one can no more understand Sartre's view of freedom, for instance, without considering his peculiar view of consciousness than one can judge Plato's doctrine that knowledge is recollection without relating it to the theory of ideas. What critics usually fail to see is that Sartre is

9 The *Notebooks'* many references to the desirability of a social revolution suggest that at least part of Sartre's reason for abandoning his work on morality was that political imperatives had come to seem more fundamental.

one of the very few twentieth century philosophers to present us with a total system.¹⁰

The predominantly ahistorical outlook of analytical philosophy has also inflected the study of Sartre. With a few exceptions, and in spite of Sartre's frequent references to the three Hs, most anglophone commentators have said little about Sartre's relations to these predecessors, or even about his place in the European post-Kantian tradition more broadly. Work still remains to be done exploring Sartre's relations not only to the three Hs but also to more shadowy figures behind the text, including Kierkegaard, Bergson, Leibniz and the Stoics.¹¹

It is perhaps especially surprising that so little attention was given to Sartre's relationship with Heidegger: after all, Heidegger was still alive when BN appeared and he pre-deceased Sartre by only four years.¹² In fact, Heidegger's influence pervades BN, although Sartre does not always acknowledge it. Heidegger's example may be responsible for BN's title (which can be seen as a response to Heidegger's most famous philosophical work, *Being and Time*), and is surely the reason for the mention of ontology in its sub-title. Heidegger's example must also have influenced Sartre's decision to make nothingness into a central philosophical concept. Sartre's focus on man's practical immersion in his everyday tasks, the choice of the activity of questioning as an investigative point of departure, and the redeployment of anguish within a new framework are also all indebted to Heidegger.¹³

Despite this debt, most of Sartre's reading of Heidegger appears to have been in French translation and he relied heavily on a small anthology of extracts and essays translated by Henry Corbin and published in France in 1938 (Heidegger 1938). Sartre borrowed the phrase 'human-reality'

10 Barnes (1965: viii–ix).

11 The exceptions include the following: Aquila (1998), Baiasu (2011), Baldwin (1979), Gardner (2005, 2009). More of this type of work has been published in France and Germany, where philosophy tends to be studied from a more historical perspective. See for example Hartmann (1966) and Simont (1998).

12 Various reasons may explain this neglect: in particular, I think Heidegger's writing style was a deterrent. It is difficult to imagine Ayer, Murdoch, Hampshire or Berlin enjoying his dense and humourless prose.

13 Of course Sartre also disagrees with Heidegger on many topics, including the significance of human death and the nature of our relations with others.

(la réalité humaine) directly from Corbin (who had used it to translate Heidegger's term *Dasein*). This 'monstrous translation', as Jacques Derrida famously described it a quarter of a century later (Derrida 1982b: 115), was subsequently held against Sartre. In conjunction with other evidence (including, importantly, EH), this usage was thought to warrant dismissal of BN as a philosophy resting on outdated and unacceptable humanist premises.

The 'anti-humanist' criticism was one among several lines of attack within a broader critical backlash against Sartre that was at its height in the 1960s and 1970s, in both France and the English-speaking world. Feminist theory provided a different kind of opposition (about which more later).

In so far as it involves Sartre, the so-called 'Humanism Debate' begins in 1946 when Jean Beaufret (a French philosopher with an interest in German thought) wrote to Heidegger, with the intention of re-establishing a dialogue between French and German philosophy after the disruption of the Second World War.¹⁴ In EH, Sartre had cited Heidegger as a fellow existentialist, and Beaufret was effectively inviting Heidegger to respond. Heidegger's reply – published in an expanded version as the 'Letter on Humanism' (Heidegger 1978b) – was disdainful. (It did not help that almost two decades had elapsed since the publication of *Being and Time* and Heidegger's philosophical focus had shifted.) Although Sartre is not extensively discussed in the 'Letter', Heidegger makes it clear that, in his view, Sartre is one of the many Western philosophers who have misconceived the proper task of thought. Sartre's focus in EH on (free) human action is, Heidegger suggests, superficial: instead, we should develop our thinking in a way that 'lets itself be claimed by Being so that it can say the truth of Being' (194). To do this, it is important to notice the resources of language and to reconceptualize our relationship with it. Indeed, the first page of the 'Letter' contains one of Heidegger's most-quoted claims: 'Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells' (Heidegger 1978b: 193).

Why does Heidegger reject 'humanism' – at least as it is normally conceived? Although the 'Letter' pursues several relevant lines of thought, the central claim is that the way the human being is *interpreted* throughout the history

14 See Baldwin (2007) for further discussion of this debate.

of humanism is insufficiently radical, and sets us on the wrong philosophical path. For example the Greek view that a human is essentially a 'rational animal' helps itself uncritically to a conception of 'life' and locates humans among other animals in a way that conceals our difference (which does not consist, for Heidegger, in 'rationality'). Behind this criticism lies a more fundamental problem, namely that 'every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one. . . . Accordingly, every humanism is metaphysical' (Heidegger 1978b: 202).

Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is an immense topic; for our purposes, the key idea to retain is Heidegger's claim – which is taken up in Derrida's philosophy – that the Western philosophical tradition has repeatedly determined being in terms of *presence*. For Heidegger, humanism is complicit with this metaphysical tendency; in its Cartesian incarnation, for example, humans are characterized as thinking subjects to whom beings are made *present* (or 'represented') as objects. Derrida elaborates the theme of the 'metaphysics of presence' with particular reference to questions of linguistic meaning and reference (which had, by the late twentieth century, also become dominant in anglophone philosophy as well as in Continental Europe).

Had French thought taken a different path after Heidegger's anti-Sartrean intervention, the question of humanism might have been forgotten. But the massive impact of structuralism in virtually every branch of the human sciences in France in the 1960s resulted in a range of 'anti-humanist' theoretical proposals that were thought to be antithetical to Sartre's earlier philosophy, by authors who were often explicitly critical of Sartre. As its name suggests, structuralism's basic insight is that the production of meaning – where this is broadly understood to include linguistic meaning, the meaning of literary texts and the meaning of social practices – depends on pre-existing and socially shared structures or systems that determine and delimit the signifying possibilities available to the people who inhabit them. A host of famous French thinkers are associated with this paradigm, including Barthes, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Althusser.¹⁵ Across these different fields

15 See Gutting (2001) for a helpful overview of many of these figures.

of investigation, the structuralist model denies explanatory primacy to individual subjectivity, and emphasizes instead the often-quoted 'decentering of the subject' and the 'death of the author'.¹⁶ Sartre was portrayed as an advocate of the individualist humanism held by this body of work to be untenable.

Of course a case can be, and has been, made in Sartre's defence; defendants have portrayed and promoted a 'new Sartre'. It should also be noted that many of the French theorists who distanced themselves from Sartre were separated from him by only a few years in age: Sartre's prominence in public life needed to be questioned if they were to displace him. A further question, which some have answered affirmatively, is whether Sartre's post-BN writings show him to be following a similar trajectory to the structuralist theorists in any case.¹⁷

The feminist attacks on Sartre were largely independent of this debate, and arose as part of the wider feminist *Zeitgeist* in the second half of the twentieth century.

One strand of feminist discussion has been biographically centred, in so far as it examines Sartre's relationship with Beauvoir and his intellectual debts to her through a feminist lens. In this context, the relevance of BN is exhausted by the light it throws on these wider questions (whether, for example, it reveals Beauvoir's influence). For this reason, I will merely remind the reader that Sartre dedicated BN *au Castor* and move on.¹⁸

The so-called 'second wave' of feminism was at its height in the 1970s when two American scholars published an influential article, 'Holes and Slime: Sexism in Sartre's Psychoanalysis' (Collins and Pierce 1976). Their purpose was to show that Sartre's examples in BN of the 'psychoanalysis of things' manifest a sexism that contradicts BN's basic anti-essentialist standpoint. In the passages they cite from Barnes's translation, Sartre considers the significance of holes and slime.¹⁹ *Slime*, he tells

16 Foucault's eloquent concluding paragraphs to *The Order of Things* are often quoted to the same effect. Foucault states that 'man is an invention of recent date' and that, if 'the fundamental arrangements of knowledge' were to crumble, 'man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (Foucault 1970: 387).

17 See for example Caws (1992).

18 *Le Castor*, which is French for 'beaver', was Sartre's nickname for Beauvoir. See Daigle and Golomb (2008) for the question of Beauvoir's influence.

19 Sartre's French term is *visqueux*, which (as I argue below) should be translated as 'viscous' rather than 'slimy'.

us, has a negative ontological meaning, in so far as it signifies a threat to consciousness, or an inversion of its central characteristics (lucidity, freedom, etc.). Sartre describes the action of slime as 'a moist and feminine sucking' which is also 'the revenge of the In-itself. A sickly-sweet feminine revenge. . . .' Collins and Pierce's objections to Sartre's treatment of holes are less forceful, as Sartre mentions several types of hole (including non-corporeal ones). Nonetheless, his suggestion that the vagina is 'a mouth and a voracious mouth which devours the penis' did not please them.

One response to these criticisms, voiced by Barnes and other critics, points out that these damning passages do not play an important role in BN; it would be absurd to take them to be 'gendering' Sartre's ontology, i.e. to infer that the for-itself is implicitly male and the in-itself implicitly female throughout. According to this defence, we ought to distinguish the (incidental) sexism of Sartre's imagery from his central philosophical doctrines. As Barnes conceded, 'a full investigation of the linguistic codes in Sartre's writing would reveal him to be a man comfortably ensconced in a world of male dominance' (Barnes 1990: 341). But, Sartre's supporters argued, we need to look beyond the regrettably sexist imagery and language in order to notice the emancipatory potential of Sartre's basic anti-essentialism.²⁰

However, this defence of Sartre may not work in relation to another, more theoretically sophisticated line of feminist criticism. According to the French philosopher Michèle Le Doeuff (2007), a philosophical 'imaginary', expressing a male outlook and male privilege, can be discerned within the Western philosophical canon as a whole and BN is no exception. As this orientation is largely unconscious and surfaces most often in imagery or examples that may appear to be incidental, we cannot dismiss these aspects of a text. One of Le Doeuff's most compelling analyses focuses on Sartre's depictions of women in his discussion of bad faith: not only the well-known woman on the date who tries not to notice her suitor's sexual ambitions but also the unfortunate women, featured in some case-studies from Stekel and cited by Sartre, who claim not to enjoy sex with their husbands, although both Stekel and Sartre disagree

20 Feminists have also found other elements in BN useful, e.g. its account of the objectifying effect of the Other's gaze. For a collection of feminist interpretations of Sartre, see Murphy (1999).

(Le Doeuff 2007: 64–68). In her unconventional book, Le Doeuff also draws on a wide range of other materials, including Beauvoir's memoirs and letters from Sartre, arguing that the real-life consequence of their intellectual partnership was effectively that Beauvoir was deprived (or deprived herself) of the status of a philosopher.

Genevieve Lloyd's *The Man of Reason*, first published in 1984, also surveyed the Western philosophical canon from a feminist critical point of view, although through a slightly different lens (Lloyd 1993). Lloyd claims that the ideal of reason is repeatedly associated in philosophy with maleness; this association, moreover, is sometimes 'inherited' by philosophers who may not consciously appreciate its workings. Lloyd argues that the idea of 'transcendence' that Beauvoir took over from Sartre (and, via Sartre, from Hegel), and uses in *The Second Sex*, is contaminated in this way and therefore an unsuitable feminist ideal.

Le Doeuff's and Lloyd's books are insightful, and their remarks about BN deserve serious attention. Still, we should note that the ambition and generality of these surveys mean that Sartre is seen to instantiate a rule rather than an exception. In addition, these critics suggest that the bias they are documenting needs to be *unearthed*: it is not always obvious, and nor do the philosophers who exhibit it even necessarily intend it.

In this respect, these feminist interpretations of Western philosophy share some of the features of Derrida's deconstructionist approach to philosophy, published in France in several influential books and articles in the late 1960s and 1970s.²¹ Some of these writings target the structuralism that was then so fashionable in France: because of their deflationary effect, Derrida is often described as a 'post-structuralist'. For Derrida there is something quixotic about the view that a signifying system can be mastered once its basic structures have been identified. Derrida's own writing focuses especially on the case of language: one of the features that makes his prose difficult to read (and even more difficult to translate) is the multiple 'performances' of language eluding authorial control. Puns, ambiguities and neologisms abound in Derrida's highly self-conscious texts.

21 Derrida continued to publish until his death in 2014, but the 'classical' deconstructive texts appeared in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Derrida's ambitious and complicated project is difficult to sum up (in part because it deliberately resists presentation as a set of doctrines), but a few further remarks about his relationship to Sartre are called for. As we saw, Derrida blames Sartre for using the term 'human-reality' and, more broadly, for perpetuating a naïvely 'anthropological' or humanist reading of Heidegger's work (Derrida 1982b). Nonetheless, the effect of Derrida's wider analysis in this essay is ultimately to dilute Sartre's specific accountability for the persistence of humanism in recent philosophy by showing, for example, that despite Heidegger's stated intentions (in his 'Letter' and elsewhere) there is a residual humanism in his thought too. As Derrida puts it:

What must hold our interest . . . is the kind of profound justification, whose necessity is subterranean, which makes the Hegelian, Husserlian and Heideggerian critiques or *de-limitations* of metaphysical humanism appear to belong to the very sphere of that which they criticize or de-limit.

(Derrida 1982b: 119)

How does BN stand in relation to these more recent developments in French philosophy? Although the phenomenon of language is occasionally discussed, it is not at the centre of Sartre's concerns. Moreover, despite occasional instances of linguistic playfulness in the text, Sartre's style and tone exhibit a pre-Derridean confidence that language can be used to say what we mean that would not have been possible (or, at least, not without discussion) twenty-five years later. The same confidence emerges in some of Sartre's reflections on his own linguistic practice, as the following exchange, from an interview with Michel Contat in 1975, shows:

Q: Your philosophical manuscripts are written in long hand, with almost no crossings out or erasures, while your literary manuscripts are very much worked over, perfected. Why is there this difference?

*A: The objectives are different: in philosophy, every sentence should have only one meaning. The work I did on *Les Mots*, for example, attempting to give multiple and superimposed meanings to each sentence, would be bad work in philosophy.*

(Sartre 1978b: 7)

But if Sartre's attitude towards language in BN is old-fashioned, the proponents of the 'new Sartre' have shown that in other respects, and sympathetically read, BN is ahead of its time. The 'humanist' criticisms voiced by Heidegger and the structuralists, for example, often draw on a simplifying interpretation of Sartre's 'Cartesian' standpoint in BN that can easily be shown to be incomplete.²² For Descartes, the *cogito* affords the subject indubitable first-personal knowledge, while mind and body are two separate substances which are, respectively, immaterial and material. In Sartre's hands, all these elements are radically modified: the reflective standpoint of the *cogito* is shown to be epistemologically unreliable, consciousness is not a substance and, in addition, it has no contents. Moreover, Sartre's characterization of the for-itself as being-what-it-is-not and not-being-what-it-is 'decentres' the Sartrean subject, and undermines the possibility of self-coincidence in a way that, arguably, keeps the 'metaphysics of presence' at bay.²³

Whatever its merits, the 'new Sartre' exemplifies BN's relevance to later French thought, enlisting it in a dialogue with more recent philosophy. At the same time, academic philosophy in the English-speaking world, which typically resists European 'fashion', has come to accept BN as a classic text that belongs in the post-Kantian tradition. I hope this new translation will help the reader to form her own view of it – for herself, responsibly and freely, as Sartre would have urged.

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22 Heidegger's attack in particular can be seen to be limited by its reliance on EH rather than BN.

23 For fuller discussion, see Farrell Fox (2003) and Howells (1992b).

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NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

Sarah Richmond

Frederick Olafson, an American philosopher, reviewed Barnes's translation of BN in 1958. He was unsympathetic to its content and also commented harshly on its style:

The French text presents, notoriously, a thankless task; it is endlessly repetitive, full of ugly neologisms, and in places quite unintelligible. *Inevitably*, the English version shares these defects to a degree and readers are not likely to find it much easier going than the original.

(Olafson 1958: 276, my emphasis)

When readers of this translation encounter stylistic infelicities, repetitions and ramblings, I hope they will bear Olafson's sentences in mind. It is common for translators to dissociate themselves from the content of their translated text, but the despair I have sometimes felt has usually been in connection with BN's style. Where they seem legitimate, I have taken steps (detailed below) to mitigate stylistic defects, but in this respect the options available to a responsible translator are limited.

Punctuation is the main area where I have felt licensed to depart from Sartre's practice in order to make the text more readable. Written French often contains long sentences with multiple subordinate clauses that are often punctuated only by commas. Sartre uses such sentences throughout

the text. Good English prose usually works differently: sentences tend to be shorter, and parentheses, colons and semi-colons (as well as commas) are used to order the meaning. It seems appropriate for a translator to take advantage, where she can, of these differences. In making some of Sartre's sentences shorter (by dividing one French sentence into two or more English ones) and/or punctuating them differently (with more semi-colons and colons, and fewer commas), I do not think I have been unfaithful. In the same vein, I have not translated all the numerous instances of *en effet* ('indeed' or 'in effect'): in the French, this phrase is often used more for emphasis than to add information so, where it seems unnecessary in the English, I have sometimes deleted it. Another phrase Sartre uses frequently is *c'est-à-dire*, which translates literally as 'that is to say': because it would badly clutter the English text if I translated each instance like that, I have often used the near-synonymous 'i.e.' instead.

As the rules for the use of quotation marks also differ between French and English (e.g. within dialogue, or to show that words are 'mentioned' rather than 'used'), I have also taken advantage of this difference and introduced quotation marks where that improves clarity.

Sartre likes to hyphenate phrases: it seems likely he got this habit from Heidegger. I have not felt entitled to interfere with this practice, despite the many cumbersome word-strings that ensue: presumably (as in Heidegger's 'Being-in-the-world') the hyphens are intended, at least in most instances, to emphasize the indissolubility of the terms they conjoin. This is true for example of *réalité-humaine*, which I translate as 'human-reality'. In other instances, the purpose of the hyphen is unclear. I have no idea why Sartre hyphenates 'peopled-world' (*monde-peuplé*) at EN 601 or 'human-will' (*volonté-humaine*) at EN 486. Sartre is also inconsistent in his use of hyphens, using the same phrase at different points in the text with or without them: although this is puzzling, I have not interfered. With some hyphenated phrases Sartre switches with apparent arbitrariness between one word order and its reverse, as for example in 'Other-object' at EN 266 and 'object-Other' at EN 296 (*objet-autrui* and *autrui-objet* respectively). I sometimes switch the order of the hyphenated words in translation: French and English follow different rules with respect to word order anyway, but there are also instances where I have switched the word order in the English, not because it is grammatically required, but for the sake of a more euphonious phrase.

What are the main differences between Barnes's older translation and mine? Barnes's achievement was immense, especially when one bears in mind the limited technology at her disposal (no computers, internet, etc.), and her translation of BN is far better than many other first English translations of French philosophical texts from the same period. Although some of Barnes's decisions were flawed, and she made a number of outright mistakes, these shortcomings alone might not warrant a new translation. Fortunately, and in part because of advances in technology and professional standards as well as the availability of recent philosophical scholarship and translations, I have also been able to enhance the text in a number of ways that I hope readers will find helpful.

Many of the writings to which Sartre refers – either directly or more allusively – were unavailable in English translation in the 1950s. To give just one example, Heidegger's *Being and Time* was first translated into English by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson in 1962. This careful, thoroughly annotated translation has enabled me to find the source of many of Sartre's numerous Heidegger references in the published English version and to quote, or discuss, or direct the reader to the corresponding passages. In the same way, of course, I have been able to benefit from other reliable translations of other philosophical works, in particular those by Husserl and Hegel.

These English translations, in conjunction with additional critical discussion by anglophone scholars, have resulted in the existence of various 'lexicons' associated with different European philosophers; this has allowed me, in some cases, to translate a French term by an English term from the relevant lexicon, and thus to maintain cross-textual consistency. In some instances this works well: I have followed most English translations of Bergson, for example, in rendering *élan* by 'impulse' rather than the alternative terms offered by French–English dictionaries (e.g. 'momentum'). But this accumulated history also creates complicated situations in which some advantages have to be sacrificed for others. Sartre's negative vocabulary offers an illustration: Sartre would have found the term *le néant* in Corbin's translation of Heidegger's 'What Is Metaphysics?', where Corbin uses it to translate the German *das Nichts* (Heidegger 1938). Sartre was also familiar with Bergson's rejection of the idea of *le néant* in *L'Évolution Créatrice* (translated as Bergson 1911). Many English translations of Heidegger render *das Nichts* as 'the Nothing', while Bergson's term *le*

néant was for a long time rendered as ‘the Nought’. Three different terms, then, are in circulation in English: nothingness, nothing and the nought. Further complications arise when one tries to reproduce in English the connections between the words in this negative vocabulary. The intended assonance of Heidegger’s controversial sentence *Das Nichts nichtet* has been reproduced, in a translation suggested by some Heidegger scholars, as ‘The nothing noths’ (Inwood 1999). Sartre built a parallel assonance into his French text by inventing the verb *néantiser*. To reproduce this assonance in English, one could either translate *néantiser* by borrowing the verb ‘to noth’ from Heidegger, or make up a new verb along the same lines: ‘to nothingize’, perhaps? However, *néantir* also closely resembles the existing French verb *anéantir* (‘to annihilate’), and this connection speaks in favour of translating it into English as ‘nihilate’. This was Barnes’s solution, and after some reflection I have endorsed it.

The widespread use of Barnes’s translation has of course ‘naturalized’ some of her vocabulary and, where I disagree with her decision about a significant term, I have had to consider the cost to (some) readers of introducing a change. For example, Sartre frequently uses the noun *surissement* and the related verb *surgir* to characterize the way the for-itself arises within the world. *Surgir* is not an unusual verb in everyday French, where it simply means ‘to arise’, with an implication of abruptness that sometimes speaks in favour of a phrase such as ‘to suddenly appear’ or ‘to crop up’. The related noun is harder to translate: one option might be ‘sudden appearance’, but that would blur the boundaries of the term ‘appearance’ in BN, which is better confined, in my view, to instances where Sartre uses *apparence* or *apparition* (often with a phenomenological sense). The difficulties are clear; nonetheless, I think Barnes’s choice of the term ‘upsurge’ was eccentric. ‘Upsurge’ is rarely used in English, and the first entry for it in most dictionaries defines it as an *increase* of something in its size or incidence: the word can be used, for example, in a phrase such as ‘a recent upsurge of crime’. (Less commonly, the verb can be used intransitively to mean ‘to surge up’, as in ‘the water upsurged’: perhaps Barnes had this usage in mind.) I have decided to use the verb ‘to arise’ instead and (where necessary) the noun ‘arising’, as these are more faithful to the register used in the French.

The case for conservatism in relation to existing translations is sometimes strengthened by the weight of published commentary elsewhere:

even if I could think of an accurate way of translating *réalité-humaine* that did less violence to Heidegger's term *Dasein*, the 'Humanism Debate' (discussed in my Introduction) has now made Sartre's and Corbin's decision into a significant event in the French reception of Heidegger. To reverse that decision would be rather like rewriting history, and in any case it is not the role of a translator to 'correct' the author of her text.

Because many of the people to whom Sartre refers have since faded into obscurity I have provided many identifying footnotes. In addition, where Sartre refers to passages or arguments in works by other philosophers I have tried to reference these for the reader. Note that I have not provided explanatory footnotes for obvious names (e.g. Plato).

In the remainder of these notes I list some further elements of my translation, either to explain my decision or to provide further information, or both. I start with 'parts of speech' and move on to various clusters of vocabulary.

Prepositions

Sartre frequently uses prepositions as if they were nouns (especially *l'au-delà* and *dehors*). I have often put quotation marks round the English equivalents, for example 'the unconditioned "beyond"' (EN 129) or 'purely as an "outside"' (EN 517), to make the grammatical structure clearer than it would otherwise be in English.

Pronouns

Il, elle, c'est: Several translation difficulties arise from the differences between the French and English pronoun systems. The following sets out my policy in relation to the main difficulties.

1. Often, once Sartre has used some noun in a sentence, he refers back to it with 'il' or 'elle', where the gender of the pronoun in French helps the reader track the referent. (For example, having mentioned *une table*, Sartre may refer back to it with *elle*.) In these cases the English may be less clear, as the gender-neutral 'it' may have more than one referent. To maintain clarity, I have sometimes repeated the noun in such cases.

2. Sartre's two modes of being – *pour-soi* and *en-soi* – are naturally translated as 'for-itself' and 'in-itself'; a consistent description of the for-itself's doings will therefore refer to it with the impersonal pronoun, 'it'. It needs to be remembered, however, that the for-itself is the mode of being of human consciousness, so it is exemplified by persons. In consequence, there are some contexts where the decision to translate with the pronoun 'it' (rather than the personal pronouns 'he' or 'she') will cause strain. Where the phrase *pour-soi* is followed in close proximity by some characterization of an activity or attitude that clearly belongs to a person, I have therefore often switched (sometimes within the same sentence) from 'itself' to 'himself'.

For example, at EN 450 I have: 'It may happen that the for-itself, having experienced these various avatars in the course of its historialization, decides – in full knowledge of the futility of his previous attempts – to pursue the other's death.'

Similarly, I have avoided using the pronoun 'it' for the Other. At EN 281, for example, I translate Sartre's *autrui n'est pas pour soi comme il m'apparaît* as 'the Other is not for himself as he appears to me'.

For greater clarity of reference, I also sometimes repeat the phrase 'for-itself' within a sentence or paragraph.

3. *Soi*: Sartre sometimes uses this term (e.g. in the phrase *pour-soi*) such that it corresponds to the reflexive pronoun 'itself' in English; at other times it is used as a noun to mean the self, or Ego. (Sartre also uses *le moi* in this sense: in some cases I signal whether the French has *moi* or *soi* by putting the French pronoun in square brackets in the text.)

Sartre also uses the noun *soi* to refer to the unattainable self-coincidence that haunts the for-itself (e.g. at EN 126). Here, I have translated it by 'the itself', sometimes putting 'itself' within scare quotes to acknowledge the grammatical oddity. One advantage of 'itself' is that it maintains the connection with the 'for-itself' whose ideal it is; it also makes it clear that Sartre is not concerned in these instances with the kind of 'self' possessed by persons, but rather with self-coincidence.

For conscience (*de*) *soi*, see 'Other words worthy of note' below.

4. *Il*: In line with French linguistic convention, Sartre often uses this masculine pronoun 'universally' to refer to a man or a woman, and (similarly) he uses *l'homme* to mean 'man' in the general sense, i.e.

humanity (male and female) in general. Of course, the corresponding terms can also be used like this in English. In both France and England, this practice has in recent decades been criticized for its implicit sexism, and many writers now use a more egalitarian alternative (e.g. 'he or she', 'they', etc.).

In relation to this political issue, it would clearly be an anachronistic imposition to alter Sartre's traditional use of the masculine pronoun (*il*); similarly, where he writes in the first-personal voice I have assumed that voice is male. In addition, once the topic of the Other is introduced (in Part Three), I have followed Sartre in referring to the Other as a 'he'.

Nonetheless, there are some contexts where, in my view, it is important to use female pronouns, as I explain in the next paragraph.

Gender pronouns in the context of interpersonal relations

In the sections in Part Three in which Sartre discusses love and sexual desire, the translation of the masculine pronoun *il* becomes particularly challenging. There is good reason to suppose that in Sartre's analysis of these relations he has a male–female (heterosexual) couple in mind. Sartre sometimes provides examples that make this explicit, and in any case any other supposition would have been unusual in the 1940s. (In addition Sartre sometimes manifests – in BN and in other writings – the prejudiced attitudes of his time towards homosexuality.) Despite this implicit heterosexual assumption, Sartre continues to refer frequently, as French allows him to, to both members of the loving or sexual couple with the male pronoun. Thus, in speaking of the lover and his beloved, Sartre regularly refers to them as *l'amant* and *l'aimé* (not in the feminine form *aimée*), and uses the masculine pronoun *il* for each of them. Now, in French this usage is consistent with the belief that one member of the couple is female – the 'universality' of *il* is sufficiently robust to allow that. But in English, if both members of a couple are referred to by 'he', most people would conclude that they are both male (and, perhaps, that they are homosexual). For this reason, in sections I and II of Part Three, Chapter 3, I have often indicated that one partner in a couple is female by using the pronoun 'she', even where this means translating Sartre's *il* by 'she'.

Note that my motive here is not political, but to replicate in English the scenario I think Sartre has in mind. If it has the effect of increasing one's sense of female presence within the text, that is a happy but coincidental consequence. (From a political perspective, of course, the heteronormativity of the scenario may be regrettable.¹)

In section III of the same chapter Sartre discusses groupings [*nous*]: here the relevant pronouns are 'we' or 'us'. At this point I revert to using 'he' throughout, as it is not clear that females are involved.

Neologisms and ungrammatical locutions

(NB: Although some of these words discussed here are now included in some French dictionaries, the earliest use given is most often Sartre's.)

chosifier, *chosiste* Sartre invents this verb (and the corresponding adjective), using it to mean 'to make into a thing [*une chose*]'. As 'thingify' is cumbersome in English and Sartre's verb is synonymous with the fairly ordinary English verb 'to reify', I have often preferred the latter over the former. Where the idea of 'thing' seems important, I signal it.

est été In this ungrammatical locution, Sartre tampers with the correct way of saying that something 'has been' in French (i.e. to use the verb *avoir* followed by *été*, the past participle of *être*), by replacing the main verb *avoir* by *être*. This generates a grammatically incorrect phrase equivalent to the English 'is been'. For example, at EN 57, Sartre writes *le néant 'est été'*, using scare quotes to acknowledge the oddness of the phrase. (Sartre also offers some reasons for using it in the same paragraph.) I cannot see any reason not to translate it literally, rendering the quoted phrase as: 'nothingness "is been"'.

négativité is a noun coined by Sartre to refer to a particular instance of nothingness within the world. I do not think it is necessary to leave it in French (as Barnes did), when a mirror neologism – 'negativity' (pl. 'negatities') can be used.

objectité can straightforwardly be translated as 'objecthood'.

1 With respect to the question of heteronormativity, some aspects of Sartre's theoretical account of human sexuality are interestingly ambiguous. His disagreement with biologically based theories leads him to deny the importance of physiological sexual difference and to claim that heterosexuality is not fundamental to sexual relations (EN 424), although a few pages later he also states that in our culture we do not often desire others 'of the same sex' (EN 427).

Vocabulary relating to the mind: psychology, motivation, experience, perception

There is a cluster of issues that are worth noting in relation to the concept of the ‘mind’ (or, as Sartre puts it, *le psyche*). From his earliest philosophical writing, Sartre engages in a polemical debate with empirical (or, as he often calls it, ‘positivist’) psychology. In BN he regards it as a source of grave ontological misunderstanding and rejects a range of psychological commonplaces, including the existence of mental states, the passivity of the emotions, and the alleged differences between acts of ‘passion’ and of reason. (Although Sartre often directs these arguments against psychologists, he also finds similar targets elsewhere; for example he rejects Bergson’s conception of the ‘deep-seated self’, as well as Proust’s analysis of jealousy.)

Sartre’s account of our experience of the Other is also revisionary, and also brought into line with his account of its ontological structure. He often describes our relations with the Other in negative and conflictual terms, as his discussion of shame shows. This is one reason for bringing out the negative connotation of the noun *épreuve* (discussed below).

Sartre rejects an account of motivation that was prominent in France in the first half of the twentieth century and often used by historians and biographers. The pair of terms *mobiles* and *motifs* (see below for discussion of their translation) is central to this account.

Sartre’s attitude to the Gestalt theory of perception was more positive, and he relies on it at several points in BN. This theory was developed by the Czech psychologist Max Wertheimer (1880–1943) and others, and influenced many twentieth-century European thinkers. The German noun *Gestalt* translates as ‘form’: accordingly, Gestalt theory emphasizes the role of structure within the perceptual field as a determinant of perception. The organization of the perceptual field allows a specific ‘figure’ to emerge against a ‘ground’; the same field, differently organized, may yield a different perception. (As these are the terms used in English translations of Gestalt theory, I use them to translate Sartre’s *forme* and *fond*.) In anglophone philosophy, the duck-rabbit discussed by Wittgenstein is one of the best-known Gestalt examples. Sartre also borrows the adjective ‘hodological’ from the psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), who was also associated with the Gestalt school. The Greek *hodos* means ‘path’; ‘hodological’ space is therefore the space that we inhabit – lived

space – in which our ‘pathways’ are more or less difficult, according to our projects.

angoisse I translate this by ‘anguish’. Sartre inherits this word (via Corbin’s translation) from Heidegger’s *Angst*, which is usually translated into English as ‘anxiety’. The term ‘anxiety’ is also often used in English translation and discussion of Kierkegaard’s philosophy, and within a broader theological tradition with which Heidegger engaged. These considerations weigh in favour of translating *angoisse* as ‘anxiety’ (and this is compatible with the range of dictionary suggestions). On the other hand ‘anxiety’ has a more medical sound in English, whereas ‘anguish’ sounds more literary and, therefore, more Sartrean. In addition, several French dictionaries suggest that *angoisse* is a more severe form of affliction.

épreuve, *éprouver* Sartre often uses the noun *épreuve* to characterize my experience of the Other (e.g. EN 403: *je suis épreuve d’autrui*). A choice has to be made between the many possible ways of translating this French term, which belongs to several semantic fields. It can mean ‘trial’, as in a scientific trial or test, or an academic test, or the activity through which one ‘tries out’ a horse or a car. It can also refer to the kind of challenge one might set someone – e.g. Hercules – to test their strength or courage. It can also mean ‘ordeal’ or ‘hardship’. At its most neutral, it might simply be translated as ‘experience’. Because Sartre frequently emphasizes the asymmetrical and threatening aspects of our relation with the Other, I frequently translate *épreuve* with verbs that hint at these aspects (e.g. ‘I undergo the Other’); where a noun seems unavoidable, I sometimes use ‘ordeal’. Where Sartre uses *éprouver* with a more neutral sense, I translate it as ‘to experience’.

mobile(s) and *motif(s)* Sartre sometimes uses the word *mobile* on its own; here it is unproblematically translated as ‘motive’. Elsewhere, in the course of more extended discussions of motivation, Sartre uses the pair of terms *mobile(s)* and *motif(s)*, invoking a terminology that was familiar in French academic discourse in the twentieth century. The two terms are counterparts, in so far as *mobile* refers to ‘subjective’ (e.g. psychological) motivational forces, while *motif* refers to ‘objective’ factors, i.e. grounds or reasons for action. Sartre discusses this familiar explanatory apparatus at length in Part Four. I translate *mobile* as ‘motive’ and *motif* as ‘reason’.

Barnes translated *motif* as ‘cause’: although she must have meant ‘cause’ in the sense of ‘ground’ (as in ‘cause for complaint’), this policy is

potentially confusing, given Sartre's categorical denial of any causal relations within consciousness.

psyche, *psychique* Sartre uses the term *psyche* to refer to the object studied by psychologists and presented to first-person reflection (EN 198): i.e. the 'mind'. This can usually be easily translated by the English equivalent 'psyche'. The corresponding adjective – 'psychic' – is also available in English, but it is not ordinarily used in the way in which Sartre typically uses *psychique*, i.e. to mean 'psychological' or 'mental'. If I were to use the word 'psychic' in these contexts, the English would seem outlandish, and it might be difficult to keep the idea of paranormal (e.g. telepathic) phenomena at bay. In most instances, therefore, I translate *psychique* as 'psychological'.

Religious vocabulary

Given Sartre's atheism, the abundant use of religious vocabulary in BN may surprise some readers. However, for Sartre the concept of God is philosophically necessary, even if He does not exist. For helpful discussion of the relationship between theology and Sartre's philosophy, see Kirkpatrick (2017).

Apart from *ens causa sui* (discussed immediately below), the religious vocabulary does not cause difficulties in translation; the main purpose of this note is to draw it to the reader's attention. In some cases there is more room for doubt about whether a religious allusion is intended than in others. Examples of terms that (probably) import a religious allusion include: incarnation, deliverance, salvation, emanation, grace, passion.

ens causa sui Sartre frequently uses this phrase, both in its original Latin, and translated into French as *cause de soi*. The reference of course is to God, or the Supreme Being, i.e. a being whose existence does not depend (causally or in any other way) on any other being. I have translated it by '[the being that] is its own cause' or, occasionally, 'the self-caused'.

Vocabulary from the three Hs

General note: Where Sartre uses a term in the German (sometimes without any translation), I usually explain it in a footnote on the same page.

The following notes explain how the French terms that Sartre takes from (translations of) these German philosophers correlate with those used by English translators and scholars. In many cases I also provide the original German term and offer a brief explanation of its meaning.

Hegel vocabulary

Sartre's footnote to EN 42 mentions a collection of extracts from Hegel's writing in French translation edited by Henri Lefebvre and published under the title *Morceaux Choisis* in 1938 (available in French as Hegel 1995). It turns out that Sartre took virtually every Hegel quotation he uses in BN from this anthology. In providing the sources of these quotations, Sartre follows Lefebvre in distinguishing (as is also customary in English) between Hegel's 'lesser' (*Petite*) *Logic* and his 'greater' (*Grande*) *Logic*. These are nicknames for Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Logic* and *Science of Logic* respectively.

dépasser In everyday French, this verb means 'to go beyond', or 'to overtake'. However, it is also used in many French translations of Hegel to translate Hegel's German term *Aufhebung*, which is often translated into English by 'to sublate'. For this reason, where the context is clearly Hegelian, I use 'to sublate'.

poser This verb is used by French translators of Hegel to render his verb *Setzen* (which many other German philosophers, including Husserl, also use). I follow most other translators by rendering it as 'to posit'. Sartre sometimes uses the noun *position* to mean the act of positing – here I translate it by 'positing'. Unlike 'posit' in English, *poser* is also used in ordinary French, where it can mean 'to put down' or 'to pose' (e.g. a question). In these non-technical contexts I have used everyday English vocabulary.

scission, scissiparité The word 'scission' also exists in English, although it is not commonly used: it means 'split' or 'division'. French translators of Hegel use *scission* frequently to translate the German *Entzweiung*; English translations of Hegel sometimes use 'sundering' or 'division' for the corresponding term. I have stuck to 'scission'. Sartre appears to use the noun *scissiparité* interchangeably with *scission*: as 'scissiparity' also exists in English, I have used it, mirroring Sartre's oscillation between the two terms.

I NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

Husserl vocabulary

As I have mentioned (in my Introduction), Sartre discovered Husserl's work in the 1930s; he had read several of Husserl's texts in their original German before he wrote BN, as well as Emmanuel Levinas's early book on Husserl (translated into English as Levinas 1995). Readers should note that the correct interpretation of many of Husserl's concepts is contested (and there are questions about consistency across texts): the notes below provide no more than a rough idea.

Husserl's key methodological concept is the 'phenomenological reduction'. Sartre also sometimes refers to it with the Greek term *ἐποχή* (transliterated *epōche*), which Husserl also used. The basic idea is that, by effecting the phenomenological reduction, the philosophizing subject suspends or parenthesizes the 'natural attitude' of everyday life, and reflects from the first-personal point of view on the way the world *appears* (i.e. in *phenomena*) to consciousness. All presuppositions concerning the existence or non-existence of the things that appear are bracketed in this reflective exercise, which is supposed to deliver presuppositionless knowledge.

appréhender Husserl uses this verb for intentional objects that are mediately (i.e. indirectly) given to the subject. A central example would be other people's consciousness which, for Husserl, is appresented in their bodies. I follow Husserl's English translators in rendering this verb as 'to appresent'.

en personne Sartre sometimes uses this phrase, or '*présence en personne*', in scare quotes, perhaps to indicate its Husserlian origins. Husserl uses it to describe the direct way in which objects are given when they are actually there, as for example in ordinary sensory perception. 'The spatial physical thing which we see is, with all its transcendence, still something perceived, given "in person" in the manner peculiar to consciousness' (Husserl 1983: §43). I translate it as 'in person'.

hyle Husserl borrows this term from the Greek word *hyle* for 'matter'. In Husserl's phenomenology the *hyle* in a mental act is its sensory matter, the brute 'given'.

intentionner French translators use this verb to render Husserl's verb *meinen*, which is usually translated into English as 'to intend', in the sense where this means the relation of consciousness to its (intentional) object. Sartre may have come across this verb in Levinas's writing on Husserl. I translate it as 'to intend'.

irréel In ordinary usage, this French word can simply mean ‘unreal’, but it is also used in philosophical contexts to translate Husserl’s German adjective *irreal*. For this reason, if the context suggests that Sartre is using technical phenomenological vocabulary, I follow English translations of Husserl by using ‘irreal’ for *irréel* (even though, of course, that is not an ordinary English word). In Husserl’s phenomenology the term ‘irreal’ is used to describe facts or objects (e.g. essences) that do not have spatial or temporal locations, as well as imagined objects.

nécessité de fait Sartre uses this phrase frequently and tells us (at EN 21) that he borrows it from Husserl, who uses it to characterize consciousness. Husserl’s point is that, although consciousness does not have any necessary existence, once it *does* exist, the non-being of its moments is inconceivable. Husserl scholars variously translate the phrase into English as ‘necessity of a fact’, ‘factual necessity’ and ‘*de facto* necessity’. I use ‘factual necessity’.

noème, noèse In translations of Husserl, these French terms correspond to ‘noema’ and ‘noesis’ in English. (Husserl borrows the words from ancient Greek, where *noema* means ‘thought’, ‘perception’ or ‘idea’.) The noema is, roughly, the content of a mental act, i.e. the way its referent is presented; the noesis is the correlative subjective process, for example the thinking of the thought or the perceiving of the perception.

objectivant, objectiver The French adjective corresponds to Husserl’s term *objektivierend*; in Husserl, it describes a basic feature of all mental acts, i.e. their having an object. English translations of Husserl render it as either ‘objectivating’ or ‘objectifying’. I use the latter, and I translate *objectiver* as ‘to objectify’ throughout.

passéifier Some dictionaries suggest that Sartre may have made this verb up. In any case he uses it to mean ‘to make/render past’ and, while I have not been able to match it with Husserlian terminology, I would guess that he borrows the concept from Husserl. I translate it by my own neologistic verb ‘to pastify’, although where that is ungainly I have sometimes translated it instead as ‘to make/render past’.

poser See entry above, in ‘Hegel vocabulary’.

présentifier French translators use this verb to translate Husserl’s *vergegenwärtigen*. I have followed most English translators in using the neologistic verb ‘to presentify’. Husserl uses this term to describe a way in which objects may be somehow ‘made present’ to consciousness even though they are

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not perceptually given. For example, anticipation ‘presentifies’ an object, in so far as its presence is not thought to be actual, but at some future date; recollection does the same thing but represents the object as having been in the past; another form of presentification is imagination, etc.

protension French translators use this noun to translate Husserl’s German noun *Protention*. I follow Husserl’s English translators in rendering it as ‘protention’. According to Husserl’s account of temporal experience, protentions and retentions are counterpart non-independent elements of any conscious experience. Protentions ‘reach’ forwards, into the future, while retentions reach back into the immediate past.

remplir, remplissement These terms correspond to Husserl’s German *erfüllen* and *Erfüllung*; the usual English translations are ‘to fulfil’ and ‘fulfilment’. For Husserl, an act is ‘fulfilled’ when evidence shows it to be as the subject took it to be. In the case of perception, for example, an intuition of a landscape is ‘fulfilled’ by the sensory determinations that present it, as Husserl puts it, as being ‘there’, ‘in person’. Where an object is absent, a subject might intend it ‘emptily’, i.e. without sensory fulfilment. (Thus I use ‘emptily’ to render Sartre’s adverbial phrase *à vide*.)

rétenion I translate this as ‘retention’. See *protension* above for explanation.

thèse, thétique A ‘thetic’ act, for Husserl, is one that sets something forth, or posits it. For example, the object of a ‘doxic thesis’ will be posited in some modality of belief.

Heidegger vocabulary

The reader should bear in mind that, as discussed earlier, Sartre’s access to Heidegger is often mediated by Henry Corbin’s French translations (Heidegger 1938), as well as by French commentaries, such as Alphonse De Waelhens’s *La Philosophie de Martin Heidegger* (De Waelhens 1942) (where Sartre found the passage from Heidegger that he quotes in a footnote to EN 413).

dépasser This verb is used in French translations of Heidegger as well as in translations of Hegel, although, confusingly, it does not usually render the same original German verb(s). In Heidegger’s case, *dépasser* sometimes translates the German verb *übersteigen* (for which it is a good match, as both these verbs can simply mean ‘to go beyond’ in ordinary language). English translations of Heidegger often use ‘to surpass’ in these contexts.

Apart from Heideggerean contexts, Sartre frequently uses the verb *dépasser* in BN on his own account to characterize the relation of the for-itself to the objects in the world that it ‘goes beyond’ in the pursuit of its ends (e.g. EN 638: *lorsque je dépasse mes objets vers un but*). Here I use the verb ‘to surpass’, which avoids cumbersome prepositions and also harmonizes with the precedent set by Heidegger, which influences Sartre’s use.

ek-stase Sartre borrows this term (*Ekstase* in German) from Heidegger. Heidegger intends to exploit the Greek root meaning of the word (which is generally used to mean ‘displacement’ or ‘removal’), i.e. ‘standing-outside’. The hyphen in Sartre’s French also emphasizes this etymology. In using *ecstasis* and *ecstases* (pl.), I follow the English translation of Heidegger (1980) and therefore drop the hyphen.

en sursis This expression is often used in French to mean ‘suspended’ (e.g. in the judicial context of a suspended sentence), ‘pending’ or ‘outstanding’ (e.g. with reference to unpaid bills). It is highly probable that Sartre took it from Corbin’s translations of Heidegger, where *en sursis* is used to translate the German noun *Ausstand* (something ‘outstanding’, as in the financial sense just cited). The basic idea, then, in connection with human-reality, is that its life always stretches before it as something not yet ‘settled’. For these reasons I translate the phrase as ‘suspended’ or ‘pending’.

être-dans-le-monde, être au milieu du monde In *Being and Time* and other writings from the same period, Heidegger argues that our way of being in the world is wholly different from the way things – worldly objects – are in the world. The hyphens that he often uses – Being-in-the-world – emphasize the indissolubility of our connection to the world we inhabit, a world that ‘concerns’ us. In contrast to this, the relation of worldly objects to the world that surrounds them is one of indifference; they are merely in the world *spatially*, and not *involved* in it (Heidegger 1980: §12). This merely spatial relation is rendered in some English translations as being *within* the world. I have translated the phrases with which Sartre makes the same distinction as ‘being in the world’ and ‘being-in-the-midst-of-the-world’ respectively. He is inconsistent in his use of hyphens.

facticité This term is the French translation of the German word *Faktizität*, which appears frequently in Heidegger’s philosophy, where it refers to the ‘fact-like’ aspects of *Dasein*’s being. From the German, it is usually

translated into English as ‘facticity’; as Sartre takes over the term from Heidegger, I translate it the same way.

historialiser, s’historialiser This verb was coined by Corbin, in his translation of Heidegger, which is presumably Sartre’s source (French dictionaries do not give earlier usages). It refers to *Dasein*’s basic constitutive capacity to ‘be historical’. Although Macquarrie and Robinson (in Heidegger 1980: see §6) translate it into English by ‘to historize’, I think it better to map Sartre’s term more closely, and I translate it therefore as ‘to historialize’, etc. (Sartre does not use it consistently, sometimes using *historiciser* – which I render as ‘to historicize’ – instead.) Following Sartre, other French thinkers (e.g. Paul Ricoeur) have used this verb.

il y a (and grammatical variants) Sartre sometimes uses this ordinary French phrase (which means ‘there is’ or ‘there are’) with the intention of alluding to Heidegger’s use of the roughly synonymous German phrase *es gibt*. In emphasizing this phrase, Heidegger wants to direct the reader’s attention to two ideas: the idea of an event or happening (rather than a state); and (via the verb *geben*) the idea of giving, i.e. that Being is ‘given’ to *Dasein*. At its first appearance and on occasional later ones (where I think signalling is helpful), I have inserted *il y a* in square brackets to remind the reader. Sartre frequently highlights this phrase himself (with italics, etc.): the reader should bear in mind the implicit allusion to Heidegger.

ipséité Sartre would have found this term in Corbin’s translations of Heidegger, where it translates Heidegger’s *Selbstheit*, which is usually translated into English as ‘selfhood’. Independently of his dialogue with Heidegger, Sartre also uses the word to characterize the for-itself’s reflexive relationship to itself. The French *ipséité* builds on the Latin word *ipse* (itself) and is rare in French usage. As the Latinate term can be easily anglicized as ‘ipseity’, I think that is how it should be translated.

on, l’on Although the French term *on* is translated literally by the English ‘one’, Sartre frequently uses it (implicitly or explicitly) to translate Heidegger’s notion ‘*das Man*’. This expression (which is also used in everyday German) is usually translated into English by ‘[the] they’. The reader needs to keep in mind that here, as in Heidegger’s usage, the sense of ‘they’ at play is that vague, anonymous idea, as in ‘they say that the weather will improve’.

possibiliser Sartre would have found this verb in Corbin's translations of Heidegger. Corbin uses it to translate Heidegger's German verb *ermöglichen*, which means 'to make possible'. As *possibiliser* is rare in French, and as Heidegger often italicizes the verb in German in order to emphasize its structure, I have used the neologism 'to possibilize' in English. Sartre sometimes contrasts it with *probabiliser*, which I translate as 'to probabilize'.

possibilité, *possible* Sartre seems to use the substantive *le possible* ('the possible') interchangeably with *la possibilité* ('possibility'). As 'the possible' sounds terrible in English, and I cannot discern any difference in meaning between the two terms, as Sartre uses them, I considered the option of collapsing them into a single English noun 'possibility'. However, Sartre may have thought he was working with a real distinction (originating perhaps in Heidegger and/or Leibniz, both of whom are important background figures to discussions of 'possibility' in the text). The conservative option seemed best.

projet, *projeter*, *pro-jet*, *pro-jeter* I translate these respectively as 'project' (noun), 'to project' (verb), 'pro-ject' (neologistic noun) and 'to pro-ject' (neologistic verb). Sartre takes the hyphenated usage from Corbin, who seeks in turn to do justice to Heidegger's exploitation of the semantic resources of the German verb *entwerfen* (to design, sketch) and the noun *der Entwurf* (sketch, blueprint, etc.). Heidegger often connects these words with the similar-sounding verb *werfen* ('to throw') and its cognates (e.g. *geworfen*). Corbin's choice of *pro-jet*, etc. allowed him to retain this connection with the idea of 'throwing' (*jeter*) in the French, a connection that is less obvious in the English.

réalité-humaine As discussed earlier, Corbin used this phrase to translate Heidegger's term *Dasein*, and Sartre borrows it from Corbin. I translate it straightforwardly as 'human-reality'. English translators of Heidegger often leave *Dasein* untranslated.

ustensile, *ustensilité*, *le complexe . . . des [réalités] ustensiles* Sartre borrows these terms from Corbin's translation of Heidegger. I translate *complexe d'ustensiles* as 'structure of equipment' and the ungainly *ustensilité* as 'equipmentality'. I translate *ustensile* on its own as 'implement'.

Bergson vocabulary

Commentators have argued that the influence of the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) on BN is usually underestimated. As a student, Sartre had read a great deal of Bergson, whose influence on French

philosophy only began to decline later in the twentieth century. There are passages in BN where Sartre is recognizably in dialogue with Bergson but does not explicitly say so. Of course, because Bergson's philosophy is written in French, it has not caused any additional translation difficulties. For the most part I retain the vocabulary used by Bergson's English translators.

durée, durer I have followed Bergson's translators in rendering *durée* – Bergson's term for lived time – as 'duration', and the verb *durer* as 'to endure'.

élan vital This is one of Bergson's most famous concepts, usually translated as 'vital impulse'. It is possible that Sartre has it in mind when he uses the term *élan* in relation to the for-itself. For this reason I translate *élan* in these contexts as 'impulse'.

fantôme Bergson often uses this adjective; following Bergson translators, I translate it as 'phantom'.

Negative vocabulary

néant I have followed Barnes in translating this noun by 'nothingness' (see discussion above). Although it is an unusual word in French and in English, it has been available in both these languages for many centuries. In French, it can be found in Descartes and Pascal. In English, it is used by John Donne in his poem 'A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day' (first published in 1633).

négativité See the entry for this term under 'Neologisms and ungrammatical locutions'.

nier This French verb corresponds to two different English verbs: 'to deny' and 'to negate'. This can cause difficulty in some contexts, and especially in relation to Hegel's philosophy: the French *nier* manifests its proximity to the idea of negation (*négation* in French; *negieren* or *verneinen* in German), whereas the connection is far less obvious in the English verb 'to deny'. The use of 'to negate' throughout, however, results in clumsy English sentences: for example, *pour nier de ce Pierre . . . qu'il soit là* (EN 61) will translate as 'to negate in Pierre . . . his being there', which leads us far from ordinary English. For this stylistic reason, I sometimes translate *nier* by 'deny'. The reader should bear in mind that 'deny' and 'negate' have a common ancestor in the Latin verb *negare*.

Words and metaphors for movement

Sartre repeatedly emphasizes the dynamic nature of the for-itself by characterizing it with various movement verbs. He often draws (metaphorically or quasi-metaphorically) on dynamic vocabulary whose literal use is to describe natural processes or events. Many of these verbs also convey the idea of upwards movement. These verbs do not always translate easily into ordinary English, especially when Sartre uses the substantive form: we would not ordinarily say, for example, that the for-itself is a 'bursting forth' or an 'upheaval'. It may be helpful for the reader to note the following examples of this kind of vocabulary.

jaillir, jaillissement The verb *jaillir* is often used for movements of water, for example in contexts where we might translate by 'to spring up', 'to gush', 'to spurt', 'to burst out', etc. I have often rendered this by 'to burst forth'.

surgir, surgissement See my discussion above.

surrection The relatively rare French term *surrection* is geological, referring to an upheaval or 'uplift' of land, an area that has been elevated. I have translated it as 'elevation' (e.g. EN 174).

Other words worthy of note

affecter, s'affecter The verb *affecter* often straightforwardly means 'to affect' (i.e. to have an effect on something), but its reflexive form *s'affecter* can be harder to translate. While it can mean 'to affect oneself', Sartre often uses it with the preposition *de* in more abstract contexts, where the meaning is closer to 'to assign' (e.g. a property to X) or 'to endow' (e.g. X with a property). At EN 58, for example, Sartre writes that *l'homme . . . s'affecte lui-même de non-être à cette fin*: in cases like this I have often used 'to assign'.

apparence, apparition Sartre uses both these words throughout BN. Although in many instances they appear to be interchangeable, there can be a difference in meaning in French. *Apparence* is more frequently used to mean 'appearance' in the philosophical sense (as, for example, in the appearance/reality distinction); *apparition* means 'appearance' in the sense of an event, for example an unannounced appearance at a party, etc. If both these French terms are translated into English as 'appearance', this distinction is of course hidden. However, Sartre does not explicitly indicate any intention to use these words with distinct senses in BN, and

nor does he consistently use them with identifiably different meanings. In addition, 'apparition' is a very unusual word in English and, used as a substantive, '[an] appearing' often sounds odd. I have therefore often used 'appearance' for both these terms, using 'appearing' instead only when it seems important to convey the event-like sense of *apparition*.

assumer Sartre often uses this French verb in the sense in which it means 'to take on/up' (e.g. a role or responsibility). Although the English verb 'assume' can also be used in this sense (e.g. 'to assume the leadership'), it is more frequently used in everyday English to mean 'to presuppose'. To avoid confusion in the English, I have used 'assume' only sparingly in these contexts, varying it with 'to take up' and 'to accept'.

l'autre, autrui, les autres Sartre uses all of these terms to refer to another person or other people. Although in most cases the French term *autrui* (which, although it has no plural form, can refer to either one or more than one person) is synonymous with *l'autre* (or *les autres*), it has an old-fashioned and literary quality and is rarely used in everyday speech. The *Littré* dictionary suggests that *autrui* can have the sense of 'this person here'; used with this sense, it may oppose the person spoken about (rather than people in general) to the speaker. Now, Sartre's account of interpersonal relations emphasizes the case in which one person stands in (asymmetric) opposition to another; one person looks, while the Other is looked at. For this reason I translate *autrui* by the Other (i.e. in the singular), capitalizing it in order to signal that it means another person. I translate *les autres* and *l'autre* slightly less strictly, using 'others', 'another' or sometimes 'an other person' (leaving the 'o' in the lower case), where this makes the sense clearer. Sartre is not consistent in his terminology but I have avoided eliminating the difference (between *autrui* and alternative terms) from the translation.

conduite(s) I translate most occurrences of this everyday French word as 'behaviour', but I avoid the plural 'behaviours', as it is less common in English. To handle Sartre's frequent use of *conduites* (pl.), I sometimes use 'forms of behaviour' or a different synonymous noun.

conscience This noun is used in French to mean both 'consciousness' and 'conscience' (e.g. moral conscience). In the first sense, the term appears throughout BN in various different contexts.

- (i) Sartre uses *conscience* to refer to consciousness quite generally as a mode of being and

- (ii) as in English, the same term can be used to apply to some particular consciousness, as in 'my' or 'his' consciousness. Neither (i) nor (ii) causes difficulty in translation.
- (iii) In addition, *conscience* can be used in French, but not in English, to refer to particular conscious events, as for example at EN 311: *la notion même de conscience ne fait que renvoyer à mes consciences possibles*, where the latter half of this phrase means 'to my possible acts of consciousness'. Here I have sometimes inserted '[acts of]' into the translation, to make the meaning clearer.
- (iv) Sartre sometimes uses the plural form [i.e. *consciences*] to refer, for example, to the coexisting 'consciousnesses' of two or more people. Although this English plural ('consciousnesses') is clunky, I have not always been able to avoid it.
- (v) The reader should note that the French phrase *avoir conscience de* translates as 'to be conscious of'. The translation will therefore replace French *avoir* ('to have') by 'to be'. I do not think this causes difficulty, but, as both verbs are charged with philosophical import in BN, it is worth pointing out.

conscience (de) soi Sartre uses this phrase to describe the basic reflexivity of human consciousness. When he first introduces it (at EN 20), he explains that his reason for placing the preposition *de* in brackets is in order to emphasize the non-positionality of this mode of consciousness; in it, the 'self' is not presented to the subject as a possible object of knowledge. Without any brackets, the French phrase *conscience de soi* means 'self-consciousness' and, since that English phrase has no preposition, Barnes decided she could use it (see her footnote to Sartre 1965: liv). To my ear, however, 'self-consciousness' may still suggest a 'positional' attitude (in which the subject confronts his 'self') of the kind Sartre wishes to avoid, and so I use phrases that retain Sartre's brackets. A further question about *soi* arises: should *soi* be translated as 'self' or as 'itself'? Although the latter has some advantages (for example, it harmonizes with Sartre's view that there is no substantial 'self' at the most basic level of first-personal experience), I think that to use it would be to over-interpret. Sartre's use of the phrase 'prereflective *cogito*' (as well as 'ipseity') registers that there is a self-like structure in consciousness (albeit not a substantial one) which, he argues, provides the ground of reflective self-consciousness.

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dépasser Sartre sometimes uses this verb in its everyday sense, to mean ‘to go beyond’, ‘to reach beyond’, ‘to exceed’, ‘to outstrip’, etc. Where the context is of this kind, I have chosen from this range of words, in a way that maximizes stylistic fluency. See above for uses of this verb in connection with Hegel and Heidegger.

engager, s’engager This verb often means ‘to engage’ or ‘to be/become engaged’ in the physical sense in which we might say a cog was engaged in machinery. However, as in English, it can also be used to mean ‘to commit (oneself)’ as well as ‘to enlist’ (e.g. in the army). Given Sartre’s emphasis on human responsibility and choice, the best translation in many contexts is ‘to commit’, but the reader should bear in mind the range of meaning.

être (and phrases using this verb) As BN is a work of ‘phenomenological ontology’ and heavily influenced by Heidegger, the verb ‘to be’ and the (sometimes neologistic) uses that Sartre makes of it are extremely important. Two constructions that should be noted are the ungrammatical locution ‘*être été*’ (discussed earlier) and *avoir à être*. This latter phrase is used by Sartre to indicate the future-oriented, dynamic and responsible aspects of the for-itself: rather than simply ‘being’ something (e.g. myself) or some way, I have it to be. Although it can be quite simply translated into English as ‘to have to be’, the reader needs to be careful in some instances not to read the phrase in the sense that involves the idea of *obligation*. If the for-itself ‘has X to be’ it is not *obliged* to be X, but chooses itself as being or aspiring to be X.

extériorité d’indifférence This phrase, which translates literally but clumsily as ‘exteriority of indifference’, occurs frequently in BN. Both the idea and the language are familiar in the German Idealist tradition, but less so in contemporary anglophone philosophy: Sartre would have found them in Hegel as well as Bergson. In both these philosophers, the adjectives ‘external’ and ‘indifferent’ are used to describe one form of relatedness, in contrast to another. Hegel, for example, holds that in mechanistic thinking an object consists of parts that are interrelated only ‘externally’ and are ‘indifferent’ to each other. This contrasts with objects that exhibit a genuine, intrinsic unity, for example the soul, whose parts are not ‘indifferent’ to each other.

I translate this phrase as ‘indifferent externality’. Although ‘exteriority’ is also available in English, ‘externality’ has the advantage of establishing continuity with many English translations of Hegel and Bergson. (Note,

however, that the second part of the title of Levinas's famous book *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'extériorité* has been translated into English as 'An Essay on Exteriority' (Levinas 1969).)

manquer, le manque The verb means 'to miss [something]' or 'to lack [something]'; the noun means 'lack'. Sartre uses these terms in some extremely complicated sentences to describe the relations in play where something is incomplete; the frequent repetition of 'm' sounds is a feature of the original text.

The following sentence from (EN 122) includes the phrases built on *manquer* that Sartre uses most often in the text:

Un manque suppose une trinité: ce qui manque ou manquant, ce à quoi manque ce qui manque ou existant, et une totalité qui a été désagrégée par le manque et qui serait restaurée par la synthèse du manquant et de l'existant: c'est le manqué.

I translate the phrase *ce qui manque* as 'the missing item'. The noun which follows – *le manquant* – can be used in French to refer to a missing thing (e.g. a missing person), and Sartre uses it here as a synonym for *ce qui manque*, but, as 'missing' cannot be used that way in English, I have omitted this synonym from the corresponding English sentence (and for the second *manquant* of the quoted passage I have reused 'the missing item'). I have translated *ce à quoi manque ce qui manque* as 'that from which [the missing item] is missing', *le manque* as 'the lack', and the final phrase *c'est le manqué* as 'that which is missed'. Sartre often puns by also using *manqué* in the way we sometimes use it in English (i.e. to mean 'failed'); where it is not obvious, I have signalled this.

originel(le) Sartre uses this adjective frequently to mean 'original', in the sense of 'pertaining to the origin' (as in 'original sin'). Because 'original' in English is also often used to mean 'inventive' or 'new', I considered using 'originary' instead, but this would undercut associations of 'original' that one might want to keep: for example, Sartre's 'original choice' has often been compared to a similar idea in Kant's philosophy. In the end I decided to stick to 'original' for most instances, but the reader should bear Sartre's intended sense in mind.

positivité, positive Although it is rare in English philosophy to find 'positivity' used as a noun, the French term is well established. Sartre would

have been familiar with it from the writings of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who coined the term ‘positivism’. For Comte, the sciences could be ranked in a hierarchy according to their degree of ‘positivity’, or the extent to which the phenomena they studied could be demonstrated or measured. Sartre often uses ‘positivity’ in opposition to ‘negativity’, to refer to something unquestionably ‘real’, capable of being affirmed. Because of this semi-technical context, I have translated the term as ‘positivity’. I also use the related adjective ‘positive’ in this sense.

réaliser, se réaliser, irréalisable Sartre uses the verb quite often with the sense of ‘to make real’. Although the English verb ‘to realize’ can be used with that sense, using it to translate *réaliser* will sometimes produce English sentences that are easily misconstrued as meaning ‘to realize’ in the more common, cognitive sense, i.e. to become aware of something. My policy has been to use ‘to actualize’ most of the time, where the intended sense is ‘to make real’. However, Sartre also uses the noun *irréalisable* to refer to something that *cannot* be made real. Here I translate *irréalisable* as ‘unrealizable’ and, if Sartre uses the verb *réaliser* in the same context, I either translate the verb in that context by ‘to realize’ or insert ‘to realize’ in square brackets, to remind the reader of the connection to the unrealizable.

In addition, at EN 216 Sartre comments on the ‘double meaning’ (ontological and gnostic) of the French verb *réaliser*: obviously, the verb needs to be translated here as ‘to realize’.

reflet, reflétant, réflexion, réfléchi This cluster of terms, already philosophically complicated in the text, presents additional difficulties in translation because the English fails to distinguish (by means of different spellings) between the types of ‘reflection’ that Sartre is able to keep distinct by using two slightly different French verbs (*réfléchir* and *refléter*).

It will help if the reader keeps in mind Sartre’s view that there is one basic form of ‘reflection’ that is a permanent and necessary structure of consciousness. For this, Sartre uses the French verb *refléter*, which means ‘to reflect’ in the sense of ‘to cast back an image/light’, i.e. in the sense in which a mirror reflects. In this context Sartre often uses the hyphenated phrase *reflet-reflétant* to describe the back-and-forth play of reflections within consciousness. I translate this phrase as ‘reflection-reflecting’. Sartre uses the different verb – *réfléchir* – to refer to a different type, or second level, of reflection – a cognitive act – in which consciousness takes itself as an object. According to Sartre, this kind of reflection is

liable to distort what it reflects on; this is ‘complicit’ reflection, which Sartre contrasts with ‘pure’ reflection.

Because of the close connection in meaning (cognitive reflection can be seen to be a kind of ‘mirroring’ of our minds), I do not think the answer would be to use two different verbs in English. In most cases the context makes it clear which type of reflection Sartre is talking about, but where I think it is possible that confusion may arise I have provided a clarifying footnote.

regarder, le regard For Sartre, the experience of *le regard* (usually translated as ‘the look’) is fundamental to our experience of the Other. Shame is a paradigmatic instance of that experience, in so far precisely as it involves our being *looked at* by someone else.

Unfortunately, the effect of translating *le regard* by the noun ‘(the) look’ is to produce some infelicitous English sentences. For example, *un regard à éviter* is better translated by ‘to avoid being seen’ rather than by ‘a look to be avoided’; similarly, *son regard fixé à terre* translates well as ‘his gaze fixed to the ground’, whereas ‘his look’ in this sentence is terrible. However, the danger of these stylistically preferable alternatives is that they may distract from, or dilute the force of, ‘the look’, which is almost a technical term in BN. I have compromised by sticking to ‘the look’ most of the time, and using ‘gaze’ occasionally in the interests of style.

tendance Early translations of Freud into French often used the noun *tendance* (‘tendency’ in English) to translate the German term *Trieb* – which corresponds to ‘drive’ in English. But this is not an ideal choice (at least not when *tendance* is translated again into English), because ‘tendency’ sounds much weaker (and less instinctual) than ‘drive’. Where Sartre is clearly in dialogue with Freud, therefore, I translate *tendance* by ‘drive’, but elsewhere I sometimes use ‘tendency’.

le visqueux, la viscosité Hazel Barnes translated these terms as ‘slime’ (adj. ‘slimy’); her aim, she tells us in a footnote, was to make the figurative meanings of the French and English terms correspond (Sartre 1965: 604). It is true that Sartre often uses *visqueux* figuratively and intends it to have unpleasant associations. On the other hand, some of these figurative uses are creative even in French, and in some instances ‘slimy’ has, I think, an overly negative force. Moreover there are good reasons for translating *visqueux* straightforwardly as ‘viscous’. Sartre’s debt to Gaston Bachelard’s

‘psychoanalysis of things’ (an exploration of the psychological meaning of natural elements) is explicit, and this precedent is important. Both Bachelard and Sartre are concerned with the psychological significance of forms of materiality: the word ‘viscous’, with its scientific or chemical register is, I think, best suited for this.

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INTRODUCTION

In search of being¹

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I

THE IDEA OF THE PHENOMENON

By reducing the existent to the series of appearances that manifest it, modern thought has made considerable progress. The aim was to eliminate a number of troublesome dualisms from philosophy, and to replace them with the monism of the phenomenon. Has it succeeded?

In the first place, we have certainly got rid of the dualism that opposes an existent's inside to its outside. The existent no longer has an 'outside', if by that we mean some skin at its surface that conceals the object's true nature from view. And if this 'true nature' is, in turn, to be the thing's secret reality – something that we can anticipate or assume, but that we can never reach, because it is 'inside' the object in question – that does not exist either. The appearances that manifest the existent are neither internal nor external: they are all of equal worth, each of them refers to

1 Translator's note (TN): Sartre's Introduction is entitled 'A la recherche de l'être'. I have been guided in my translation by the thought that Sartre probably intended to echo Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Note that Proust is used as an example within BN's opening pages.

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other appearances, and none of them has priority. Force, for example, is not a metaphysical *conatus* of some unknown kind, concealed behind its effects (accelerations, deviations, etc.); it is the sum of these effects. Similarly, an electric current has no secret other side: it is nothing but the collection of physicochemical actions (electrolytic processes, the incandescence of a carbon filament, the movement of the galvanometer's needle, etc.) that manifest it. None of these actions is sufficient to reveal it. But it does not point to anything *behind* it; each action points to itself and to the total series. From this it obviously follows that the dualism of being and appearing no longer has a legitimate place in philosophy. An appearance refers to the total series of appearances, not to some hidden reality that siphons off all the existent's *being* for itself. And the appearance, for its part, is not an unstable manifestation of that being. For as long as we were still able to believe in noumenal realities, the appearance was presented as purely negative, as 'that which is not being': it had no being other than that of illusion and error. But that being was itself borrowed, it was itself a sham, and the biggest problem facing us was how to maintain the appearance with enough cohesion and existence to stop it from being reabsorbed into non-phenomenal being. But once we have freed ourselves from what Nietzsche called 'the illusion of backworlds'² – and if we no longer believe in any being-behind-appearance – the appearance becomes, on the contrary, full positivity. Its essence is an 'appearing' that is no longer opposed to being but which is, on the contrary, its measure. For the being of an existent is precisely the way it appears. Thus we are led to the idea of the *phenomenon* as we encounter it, for example, in Husserl's or Heidegger's 'Phenomenology': the phenomenon, or the absolute-relative. The phenomenon remains relative because its 'appearing' necessarily implies someone to whom it appears. But it does not have the twofold relativity of Kant's *Erscheinung*.³ It does not indicate, behind its shoulder some true being, a being that is itself the absolute. It is what it is absolutely, because it is disclosed as it is. The phenomenon can be studied and described as such, because it is *absolutely indicative of itself*.

2 TN: Sartre is loosely quoting from a French translation of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. The French *arrière-mondes* is used to translate Nietzsche's German neologism *Hinterwelten*, which is often translated into English as 'backworld'. The idea is that of a world 'beyond' or 'behind' the world we experience.

3 TN: Kant's term *Erscheinung* is normally translated into English as 'appearance'.

At the same time, the duality of potentiality and actuality will collapse.⁴ Everything is in actuality. Behind the act there is neither potentiality, nor 'hexis',⁵ nor virtue.⁶ The term 'genius', for example – as it is used when we say that Proust 'had' great genius or that he 'was' a genius – should not be taken to mean a distinctive power to produce various writings, a power that is not exhausted in producing those writings. Proust's genius is neither his work considered in isolation, nor the subjective power to produce it: it is his work, seen as the set of manifestations of his person. That is why we can, in the end, also reject the dualism of appearance and essence. Appearance does not hide essence, but reveals it: it is the essence. The essence of an existent is no longer a power embedded deep inside it; it is the manifest law governing the succession of its appearances, the principle of the series. Duhem was right to oppose Poincaré's nominalism – which defined a physical reality (for example, an electrical power) as the sum of its various manifestations – with his own theory, according to which a concept is the *synthetic* unity of those manifestations.⁷ Of course, nothing could be farther from nominalism than phenomenology. But ultimately, an essence, understood as the principle of a series, is no more than the connection between the appearances – which means it is itself an appearance. That explains how an intuition of essences (Husserl's *Wesensschau*, for example) is possible.⁸ Thus phenomenal being manifests itself: it manifests its essence just as much as its existence, and it is nothing but the interconnected series of these manifestations.

Does this mean we have succeeded in eliminating all dualisms, by reducing the existent to its manifestations? It seems rather that we have

4 TN: Sartre is referring to the distinction between *energeia* and *dunamis* in Aristotle's metaphysics. Both terms are variously translated in different English translations: I use 'actuality' and 'potentiality' for Sartre's *acte* and *puissance*.

5 TN: The ancient Greek term *hexis* is important in Aristotle's philosophy. Although it is agreed to be difficult to translate Aristotle's exact meaning, 'habit' and 'disposition' are both commonly used.

6 TN: Sartre uses the French word *vertu* here in its older sense, to mean a power or active principle – as it is used in English philosophy in the well-known example of 'dormitive virtue'.

7 TN: Pierre Duhem (1861–1916) was a French physicist and philosopher of science. Henri Poincaré (1854–1912) was a French mathematician, physicist and philosopher of science.

8 TN: Husserl's English translators usually render *Wesensschau* as 'intuition of essences'.

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converted them all into one new dualism: the finite and the infinite. For the existent cannot be reduced to a finite series of manifestations, as each of these is a relationship to a constantly changing subject. While an object may only be given through a single 'Abschattung', the mere fact of being a subject implies the possibility of multiplying the points of view on to that 'Abschattung'.⁹ This amounts to multiplying the 'Abschattung' in question to infinity. Furthermore, if the series of appearances was finite it would follow (absurdly) that the ones appearing first could not *reappear* or (even more absurdly) that they could all be given at the same time. We need to be quite clear that our theory of the phenomenon has replaced the thing's *reality* with the phenomenon's *objectivity*, and that it founds this latter by appealing to the infinite. The reality of this cup is that it is there, and that it is not me. We can express this by saying that the series of its appearances is connected by a principle that does not depend on my whim. But an appearance considered just as it is – without reference to the series to which it belongs – can only be an intuitive and subjective plenitude: the way in which the subject is affected. If a phenomenon is to show itself as *transcendent*, the subject himself must transcend the appearance towards the total series of which it is a member. He must grasp *redness* – i.e. the principle of the series – through his impression of red; the electric current through the electrolysis, etc. But if the object's transcendence is grounded in the necessity that any appearance can be transcended, it follows axiomatically that the series of appearances for any object is posited as infinite. Thus a finite appearance indicates itself in its finitude but at the same time, in order to be grasped as an appearance-of-that-which-appears, it demands to be surpassed towards the infinite. This new opposition, the 'finite and the infinite' or, better still, 'the infinite within the finite', replaces the dualism of being and appearing: what appears is in effect only an *aspect* of the object, and the object is entirely within this aspect and entirely outside it. Entirely *inside*, in so far as it manifests itself in this aspect: it is indicated as the structure of the appearance, which is at the same time the principle of the series. Entirely *outside*, because the series itself never appears, and cannot appear.

9 TN: The term *Abschattung* refers in Husserl's phenomenology to the incomplete aspect of an object given in our perception of it, for example to the one side of a six-sided die that we may be able to see. Kersten translates it as 'adumbration' (Husserl 1983); it is sometimes translated as 'profile'.

Thus, once again, the outside is opposed to the inside, and the being-that-does-not-appear is opposed to its appearance. Similarly, a certain 'power' returns to the phenomenon, inhabiting it and endowing it with its very transcendence: the power to be developed through a series of real or possible appearances. Even if we reduce Proust's genius to the works he produced, it is still equivalent to the infinity of possible points of view that we can take up on Proust's work – its so-called 'inexhaustibility'. But isn't this inexhaustibility, which implies a transcendence and an appeal to the infinite, a 'hexis' – even at the very moment in which we apprehend it in the object? In the end, the essence is radically cut off from any individual appearance that manifests it, because it must be possible, as a matter of principle, for it to be manifested by a series of individual manifestations. 14

By replacing in this way a variety of oppositions with a single dualism that founds them all, have we gained or lost? Soon we shall see. For now, the primary consequence of the 'theory of the phenomenon' is that the appearance does not refer to being in the way in which the phenomenon, in Kantian philosophy, refers to the noumenon. Because there is nothing behind the appearance, and it indicates nothing more than itself (and the total series of appearances), it cannot be supported by any being other than its own, and cannot therefore be the thin skin of nothingness separating subject-being from absolute-being. If the essence of appearance is an 'appearing' that is no longer opposed to any being, there is a genuine problem of the being of this appearing. This is the problem with which we are concerned here, and it will be the point of departure for our investigations into being and nothingness.

II

THE PHENOMENON OF BEING AND THE BEING OF THE PHENOMENON

An appearance is not supported by some other, different, existent: it has its own being. The first being that we encounter in our ontological investigations is, therefore, the being of appearance. Is that being itself an appearance? So it seems, at first sight. A phenomenon is something that manifests itself, and being manifests itself in some way to

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all of us, since we can talk about it and have some understanding of it. Thus there must be a *phenomenon of being*, an appearing of being, that can be described as such. Being will be disclosed to us through some immediate means of access (boredom, nausea, etc.), and ontology will be the description of the phenomenon of being as it manifests itself, i.e. without intermediary. However, for any ontology, we need to ask a preliminary question: is the phenomenon of being that we reach by these means identical to the being of the phenomena? Or: is the being that is disclosed to me, that *appears* to me, the same in nature as the being of the existents that appear to me? Here there seems to be no problem: Husserl showed us how an eidetic reduction is always possible – in other words, how we can always surpass a concrete phenomenon towards its essence – and, for Heidegger, ‘human-reality’ is ontico-ontological, which means it can always surpass the phenomenon towards its being.¹⁰ But to move from a particular object to its essence is to move between two homogeneous items. Can the same be said of the movement from an existent to the phenomenon of being? In surpassing an existent towards the phenomenon of being, are we really surpassing it towards its being, as we might surpass a particular red towards its essence? Let us take a closer look.

In a particular object, we may always distinguish qualities such as colour, smell, etc. And, on the basis of these, we can always establish the essence they imply – just as a sign implies its meaning. The ‘object–essence’ pair is an organized whole: the essence is not inside the object; it is the object’s meaning, the principle of the series of appearances which disclose it. But the object’s being is neither one of its qualities, capable of being grasped among others, nor is it a meaning of the object. The object does not refer to being as it might refer to a meaning: it is not possible, for example, to define being as a *presence*, since *absence* also discloses being, since not being there is still a way of being. The object does not *possess* being, and its existence is not a participation in being or any other kind of relation. The only way to define its way of being is to say that it is; for the object does not conceal being, but neither does it disclose it. It does not conceal it: it would be futile to set aside some of an existent’s qualities, to try to find its being behind

10 TN: Sartre probably has *Being and Time* in mind here (Heidegger 1980).

them; its being belongs to all of them equally. It does not disclose it: it would be futile to appeal to the object in order to apprehend its being. The existent is phenomenal; in other words, it designates itself as an organized set of qualities. *Itself*, and not its being. Being is merely the condition of any disclosure: it is being-in-order-to-disclose, not being disclosed. What, then, does Heidegger mean when he speaks of a 'surpassing towards the ontological'? Of course, I can surpass this table or this chair towards its being, and I can pose the question of the table-being or chair-being. But in that moment I look away from the table-phenomenon in order to fasten on the being-phenomenon, which is no longer the condition of all disclosure but which is itself something disclosed, an appearance which, as such, needs in its turn some being on whose foundation it could be disclosed.

If the being of phenomena cannot be resolved into a phenomenon of being and if, however, we can only say anything about being by consulting this phenomenon of being, we must establish first and foremost the exact nature of the relationship that joins the phenomenon of being to the being of the phenomenon. This will be easier if we note that all our observations so far were directly inspired by the revealing intuition of the phenomenon of being. By considering being not as the condition of disclosure, but rather as an appearance that can be fixed in concepts, we have understood in the first place that knowledge alone cannot account 16 for being, i.e. that the being of the phenomenon cannot be reduced to the phenomenon of being. In brief, the phenomenon of being is 'ontological' in the sense in which Saint Anselm's and Descartes's proof is called *ontological*. It is a call for being: it requires, in so far as it is a phenomenon, a transphenomenal foundation. The phenomenon of being requires the transphenomenality of being. That does not mean that being is hidden *behind* the phenomena (we saw that the phenomenon cannot mask being), nor that the phenomenon is an appearance that refers to a being distinct from it (the phenomenon has being *qua appearance*, i.e. it indicates itself on the foundation of being). The preceding considerations imply that, although the being of the phenomenon is coextensive with the phenomenon, it must escape the phenomenal condition in which existence is possible only to the extent that it is revealed, and consequently that it overflows and founds any knowledge we can have of it.

III

THE PREREFLECTIVE *COGITO* AND THE BEING OF
THE *PERCIPERE*

One might be tempted to reply that all the difficulties mentioned so far stem from a particular conception of being, a kind of ontological realism that is wholly incompatible with the very idea of *appearance*. Indeed, the being of an appearance is proportionate to its *appearing*. And, since we have limited reality to the phenomenal, we can say of the phenomenon that it is as it *appears*. Why not pursue this idea right to its limit and say that the being of an appearance is its appearing? That is simply a way of clothing Berkeley's venerable phrase '*esse est percipi*' in new words. And effectively, that is just what Husserl does when, having carried out the phenomenological reduction,¹¹ he treats the noema as *irreal* and declares its '*esse*' to be a '*percipi*'.¹²

Berkeley's famous formula seems unlikely to satisfy us. And essentially this is for two reasons: first, because of the nature of the *percipi* and second, because of the nature of the *percipere*.

- The nature of the '*percipere*' – If any metaphysics presupposes a theory of knowledge, it is equally true that any theory of knowledge presupposes a metaphysics. That means, among other things, that any idealism aiming to reduce being to our knowledge of it must first account in some way for the being of knowledge. If, on the contrary, you begin by positing the latter as a given – without any concern to found its being – and you go on to claim that '*esse est percipi*', the '*perception–perceived*' totality, deprived of any solid being to support it, will collapse into nothingness. Thus the being of knowledge cannot be measured by knowledge; it escapes the '*percipi*'.¹³ Thus the foundation-being of the *percipere* and of the *percipi* must

11 TN: See my note on the phenomenological reduction in the section on Husserl vocabulary in Notes on the Translation.

12 TN: Husserl says this in §98 of *Ideas* (Husserl 1983). Berkeley's formula *esse est percipi* means 'to be is to be perceived'. *Percipere* – in this section's title – is the infinitive form of 'to perceive' in Latin. For the terms *noema*, *noesis* and *irreal*, see the section on Husserl vocabulary in Notes on the Translation.

13 Sartre's note: It goes without saying that any attempt to replace the *percipere* by some other attitude of human-reality will be equally fruitless. If you allow that being is revealed to man in his 'doing', you still need to establish the being of the doing, apart from the action.

itself escape the *percipi*: it must be transphenomenal. We are back where we began. However, one might allow that the *percipi* refers to a being that escapes the laws of appearance, while still maintaining that this transphenomenal being is the subject's being. The *percipi* would therefore direct us towards the *percipiens* – the known towards the knowledge – and this latter to the knowing being in so far as he is, and not in so far as he is known, i.e. to consciousness. Husserl understood this: for if in his view the noema is an irreal correlative of the noesis, whose ontological law is the *percipi*, he regards the noesis on the contrary as reality, whose chief characteristic is to offer itself up to the reflection that knows it as 'having already been there first'. For the law of being that governs the knowing subject is *being-conscious*. Consciousness is not a special kind of knowledge, called 'inner sense' or 'self-knowledge'; it is the subject's dimension of transphenomenal being.

Let us try to improve our understanding of this dimension of being. We said that consciousness is the knowing being in so far as he is, and not in so far as he is known. In consequence, we ought to abandon the primacy of knowledge, if we want to found that knowledge itself. And, without doubt, consciousness can know and it can know itself. But it is, in itself, something other than knowledge turned back on itself.

As Husserl showed, all consciousness is consciousness of something.¹⁴ In other words, there is no [act of] consciousness that does not posit a transcendent object or, if you prefer, consciousness has no 'content'. We need to give up these neutral 'givens' that can constitute themselves, according to the chosen system of reference, into the 'world' or the 'psyche'. A table is not in consciousness, not even as a representation. A table is in space, beside the window, etc. Indeed the table's existence is a centre of opacity for consciousness; an infinite process would be required to make an inventory of the total content of a thing. To introduce this opacity within consciousness would be to refer to infinity any inventory that consciousness might make of itself, to turn consciousness into a thing, and to reject the *cogito*. Philosophy's first course of 18 action, therefore, should be to expel things from consciousness and to restore the true relationship between this latter and the world: namely,

14 TN: Husserl makes this point in many of his writings. See for example Husserl (1960: 72).

that consciousness is a positional consciousness of the world. All consciousness is positional in that it transcends itself to reach an object, and it is exhausted by just this act of positing. All that is *intentional* in my consciousness is directed outside, towards the table: all my judicative or practical activities, and all the affectivity of the moment, transcend themselves; they aim at the table, and are absorbed within it. Not every [act of] consciousness is a form of knowledge (for example, there are affective modes of consciousness), but every knowing consciousness can only be knowledge of its object.

Nonetheless, the necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object is that it should be conscious of itself as being this knowledge. It is a necessary condition: if my consciousness were not conscious of being conscious of a table, it would thereby be conscious of the table without being conscious that it was so or, alternatively, it would be a consciousness that did not know itself, an unconscious consciousness – which is absurd. It is a sufficient condition: my being conscious of being conscious of the table suffices for me in fact to be conscious of it. It is not of course sufficient to enable me to claim that the table exists in itself – but rather that it exists for me.

What is this consciousness of consciousness? We are in the grip of the illusion of the primacy of knowledge to such an extent that we are willing to turn our consciousness of consciousness immediately into an *idea ideae*, as Spinoza does,¹⁵ in other words to turn it into a knowledge of knowledge. When Alain comes to express the evident fact that ‘to know is to be conscious of knowing’, he translates it into these terms: ‘To know is to know that one knows’. What is hereby defined is *reflection*, or the positional consciousness of consciousness or, better still, *knowledge of consciousness*. This is to be understood as an [act of] consciousness that is complete in itself and directed towards something that it is not, in other words towards the reflected consciousness. It thus transcends itself and, like our positional consciousness of the world, its aiming at its object exhausts it. Only in this case its object is itself an [act of] consciousness.

This interpretation of the consciousness of consciousness does not seem acceptable. The reduction of consciousness to knowledge effectively imports the subject–object duality – which is typical of knowledge – within

15 TN: Spinoza advances this view of self-consciousness in Part Two of his *Ethics* (Spinoza 1985).

consciousness. But if we accept the law of the knowing-known dyad, a third term will become necessary for the knowing in its turn to become known, and we are placed in a dilemma. Either we stop at some term within the series: the known, the knowing that is known, the knowing of the knowing that is known, etc. – in which case the phenomenon in its totality collapses into the unknown (i.e. we always come up against a reflection that is not conscious of itself and is the final term); or we declare an infinite regress (*idea ideae ideae*, etc.) to be necessary, which is absurd. In this way the necessity of ontologically founding knowledge is duplicated by a new necessity: that of founding it epistemologically. Surely we ought not to introduce the law of the dyad into consciousness? Consciousness of self is not a dyad. If we want to avoid an infinite regress, it must be an immediate and non-cognitive relationship of self to self. 19

Moreover, reflective consciousness posits the reflected consciousness as its object: in the act of reflection I bring judgements to bear on my reflected consciousness; I am ashamed of it, I am proud of it, I want it, I reject it, etc. The immediate consciousness that I have of perceiving does not allow me either to judge, or to want, or to be ashamed. It does not know my perception, or posit it: all that is intentional within my current [act of] consciousness is directed outwards, towards the world. On the other hand, this spontaneous consciousness that I have of my perception is constitutive of my perceptual consciousness. In other words, any positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself. If I count the cigarettes that are in this case, my impression is that of disclosing an objective property of this group of cigarettes: *they are twelve*. This property appears to my consciousness as a property existing in the world. I may well have no positional consciousness at all of counting them. I do not ‘know myself as counting’. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that children who are capable of spontaneous addition are unable to explain afterwards how they did it. The tests by Piaget which demonstrated this constitute an excellent refutation of Alain’s formula: To know is to know that one knows. And yet, at the moment when these cigarettes disclose themselves to me as ‘twelve’, I am non-thetically conscious of my adding activity.¹⁶ Indeed, if I am

16 TN: ...une conscience non-thétique ... See note on *thèse* in the section on Husserl vocabulary in Notes on the Translation.

12 INTRODUCTION

questioned, if someone asks me: 'What are you doing?', I will reply immediately 'I am counting', and my reply does not aim only at the instantaneous [act of] consciousness that I can reach through reflection, but also at those [acts of] consciousness that have passed by without being reflected on, which will forever remain *unreflected* in my immediate past. Thus, reflection lacks any kind of primacy in relation to reflected consciousness: it is not by means of the former that the latter is revealed to itself. On the contrary, non-reflective consciousness is what makes reflection possible: there is a prereflective *cogito*, which is the condition of the Cartesian *cogito*. At the same time, my non-thetic consciousness of counting is actually the condition of my activity of addition. How, if it were otherwise, could addition be the unifying theme of my [acts of] consciousness? In order for that theme to preside over the whole series of syntheses of unifications and of recognitions it must be present to itself, not in the manner of a thing but as an operative intention that can exist
20 only – to use an expression of Heidegger's – as a 'revealing-revealed'.¹⁷ Thus, in order to count, it is necessary to be conscious of counting.

'Of course,' it might be said, 'but that is circular'. Because isn't it necessary, for me to be able to be conscious of counting, that in fact I am counting? That is true. However, that does not lead to a circle – or, alternatively, it is the very nature of consciousness to exist 'in a circle'. We can express this in these terms: any conscious existence exists as the consciousness of existing. We can understand now why the most basic consciousness of consciousness is not positional: because it and the consciousness of which it is conscious are one and the same. In a single movement, consciousness determines itself as consciousness of perception, and as perception. The requirements of syntax here have obliged us until now to talk of 'non-positional consciousness of self'. But we cannot go on using this expression, in which the phrase 'of self' still evokes the idea of knowledge. (From now on we will put the 'of' between brackets, to indicate that it answers only to a grammatical constraint.¹⁸)

17 TN: ...comme 'révelante-révelée'...I have not been able to find this exact phrase in Heidegger; Sartre probably took it from Corbin's preface to his translations. Here Corbin says that the mode of being of human-reality is: 'd'être révelante et en même temps réalite-révelée', using these phrases to translate Heidegger's *erschliessend* and *Erschlossenheit* (Heidegger 1938: 15).

18 TN: See my note on *conscience (de) soi* in Notes on the Translation.

We should not regard this consciousness (of) self as a new [act of] consciousness, but as the *only possible mode of existence for any consciousness of something*. Just as an extended object is constrained to exist in three dimensions, so an intention, a pleasure and a pain can exist only as immediately conscious (of) themselves. The being of an intention can only be consciousness; otherwise the intention would be a thing inside consciousness. We must not therefore take this to mean that some external cause (an organic disturbance, an unconscious drive, another 'Erlebnis'¹⁹) can determine the production of a psychological event – a pleasure, for example – and that the event whose material structure is hereby determined will in addition be compelled to produce itself as conscious (of) self. That would make non-thetic consciousness into a quality of positional consciousness (in the sense in which perception – as a positional consciousness of that table – might have the additional quality of consciousness (of) self), and would thereby lead us back to the illusion of the theoretical primacy of knowledge. In addition, it would turn the psychological event into a thing, and qualify it as conscious, as I may qualify, for example, this blotting paper as pink. Pleasure cannot be distinguished – even logically – from the consciousness of pleasure. The consciousness (of) pleasure is constitutive of pleasure, as its very mode of existence, as the matter of which it is made, and not as a form that is subsequently imposed on to some hedonic matter. Pleasure cannot exist 'before' any consciousness of pleasure – not even in virtual form, or as a potentiality. A potential pleasure can exist only as a consciousness (of) its potentiality; there are no virtualities in consciousness that are not conscious of being virtual. 21

Conversely, as I showed earlier, we must avoid defining pleasure in terms of my consciousness of it. That would push us into an idealist view of consciousness that would lead us back – in a roundabout way – to the primacy of knowledge. We must not let pleasure disappear behind its consciousness (of) itself: it is not a representation, but a concrete, full and absolute event. Pleasure is *no more* a quality of consciousness (of) self than consciousness (of) self is a quality of pleasure. It is *no more* true that there is first a consciousness which afterwards becomes affected by

19 TN: The term *Erlebnis* comes from Husserl, who uses it to mean 'experience' in a broad sense. In deference to this broad sense, Kersten translates it as 'mental process' (Husserl 1983). French translators, picking up the sense of *Leben* (to live), sometimes render it as *le vécu*.

‘pleasure’ – like water being dyed – than that there is first a pleasure (unconscious or psychological) which afterwards receives the quality of being conscious, like a beam of light. There is one indivisible and indissoluble being – not a substance that supports its qualities as lesser beings, but a being that is existence through and through. The pleasure is the being of the consciousness (of) self, and consciousness (of) self is the pleasure’s law of being. Heidegger formulates this well when he writes (about ‘*Dasein*’, to be exact, rather than consciousness) that: ‘The “how” (essentia) of this being must, if it is possible to speak of it at all, be conceived in terms of its being (existentia).’²⁰ This means that consciousness is not produced as a particular exemplar of an abstract possibility but that, in arising in the heart of being, it creates and maintains its essence, i.e. the synthetic arrangement of its possibilities.

This also means that the being of consciousness is opposite in type to the being revealed to us by the ontological proof: as consciousness is not possible before being but instead comprises – in its being – the source and condition of all possibility, its existence implies its essence. This is felicitously expressed by Husserl as its ‘factual necessity’.²¹ For there to be an essence of pleasure, there must first be the fact of some consciousness (of) this pleasure. And any attempt to invoke the alleged laws of consciousness, whose articulated sum would be said to constitute its essence, will be futile: a law is a transcendent object of consciousness; it is possible to have consciousness of a law, but not a law of consciousness. For the same reasons, it is impossible to assign to consciousness any motivation other than itself. Otherwise we would need to conceive of consciousness, to the extent to which it is an effect, as not being conscious (of) itself. In some respect, consciousness would need to be without being conscious (of) being. We would succumb to that all too common illusion that makes consciousness into something half-unconscious, or passivity. But consciousness is consciousness through and through. It cannot therefore be limited by anything other than itself.

22 We must not conceive of this determination of consciousness by itself as a genesis, or a becoming, because that would require us to suppose that consciousness is prior to its own existence. Nor must we conceive

20 TN: Sartre is quoting from *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1980), §9.

21 TN: See my note on Husserl’s ‘factual necessity’ in Notes on the Translation.

of this self-creation as an act. In that case consciousness would be consciousness (of) itself as an act, which it isn't. Consciousness is a plenum of existence and this determining of itself by itself is an essential characteristic. We must be careful not to misuse the expression 'cause of itself', which can lead one to suppose a progression, a relationship between a self-cause and a self-effect. It would be more accurate to say, quite simply, that consciousness exists *through* itself. And by this we do not mean that it is 'drawn out of nothingness'.²² There could not be any 'nothingness of consciousness' *before* consciousness.²³ 'Before' consciousness we can conceive only of a plenum of being, no element of which could refer to an absent consciousness. For there to be a nothingness of consciousness we would need a consciousness that has existed and is no longer, and a witness consciousness positing the nothingness of the first consciousness in the service of a synthesis of recognitions. Consciousness is prior to nothingness, and 'derives from being'.²⁴

Perhaps these conclusions are difficult to accept. But, examined more carefully, they seem perfectly clear: the paradox is not that some existences exist through themselves, but that there are any that do not. What is genuinely unthinkable is passive existence – in other words, an existence that can perpetuate itself without having enough power either to produce or to conserve itself. From this point of view, nothing could be more unintelligible than the principle of inertia. For if consciousness were indeed able to 'come from' something else, where would it 'come from'? Out of the limbo of the unconscious, or the physiological. But if we ask, in turn, how such a limbo can exist and how it derives its existence, we find ourselves led back to the concept of passive existence. In other words, we are absolutely unable to understand how these givens – which are not conscious and do not derive their existence from themselves – might nonetheless perpetuate this existence, and even find the power to produce

22 TN: ... *qu'elle se 'tire du néant'*. This phrase is often used in French to refer to the act of creation (as in God's creation of the world 'out of nothing', for example).

23 TN: ... *'néant de conscience'* ... I am not sure why Sartre puts this phrase within quotation marks. Although it is tempting to translate it as 'the *non-being* of consciousness' because that sounds better in English, I stick to 'nothingness' for consistency.

24 Sartre's note: This does not at all imply that consciousness is the foundation of its being. On the contrary, as we will see later, the being of consciousness is fully contingent. We wish to point out merely that: 1. *nothing* is the cause of consciousness; 2. consciousness is the cause of its own way of being.

a consciousness. We can see a clear symptom of this in the huge popularity of the proof ‘*a contingentia mundi*’.²⁵

- Thus, by renouncing the primacy of knowledge, we have discovered the *being* of the knower and encountered the absolute – that same absolute that the seventeenth-century rationalists defined, and constituted logically, as an object of knowledge. But, precisely because we are concerned here with an absolute existence rather than knowledge, we escape
- 23 the well-known objection, according to which a known absolute can no longer be absolute, because it becomes relative to the knowledge we have of it. For here the absolute is not the result of a logical construction in the field of knowledge, but the subject of the most concrete experiences. And it is in no way *relative* to this experience, because it is this experience. It is therefore a non-substantial absolute. The ontological error of Cartesian rationalism was not to have seen that, if we define the absolute in terms of the primacy of existence over essence, we cannot conceive of it as a substance. There is nothing substantial about consciousness; it is a pure ‘appearance’, where this means it exists only to the extent to which it appears. But it is precisely because consciousness is pure appearance, because it is a total void (since the entire world is outside it), because of this identity within it between its appearance and its existence, that it can be considered as the absolute.

IV

THE BEING OF THE *PERCIPI*

We appear to have reached the end of our investigation. Having reduced things to the combined totality of their appearances, we noted that these appearances called for a being that was no longer itself an appearance. The ‘*percipi*’ directed us to a ‘*percipiens*’, whose being was revealed to us as consciousness. Thus we have reached the ontological foundation of knowledge: the first being, to whom all other appearances appear; the absolute, in relation to which each phenomenon is relative. This being is not ‘the subject’, in the Kantian sense of the term, but subjectivity

25 TN: This Latin phrase means ‘from the world’s contingency’; it often figures in a so-called ‘proof’ of God’s existence. The idea is that the contingent world requires a *ground* in necessity.

itself, in its self-immanence. In arriving here, we have escaped idealism, according to which being is measured by knowledge and is therefore subject to the law of duality. For idealism, all being is known, including thought itself: thought appears to itself only through its own products, such that we only ever grasp it as the meaning of thoughts that have occurred, and the philosopher in search of thought is obliged to consult the constituted sciences in order to derive thought from them as their condition of possibility. We have apprehended a being, on the contrary, that escapes and founds our knowledge, and we have laid hold of thought, not as it is given in representation, or as the meaning of thoughts that have been expressed, but directly, as it is – and this mode of apprehension is not a phenomenon of knowledge, but the structure of being. We find ourselves here on the terrain of Husserlian phenomenology, even though Husserl himself was not always faithful to his primary intuition. Are we satisfied? We have found a transphenomenal being, but is that really the being to which the phenomenon of being points? Is it really the ‘being of the phenomenon’? In other words, is the being of consciousness sufficient to found the being of appearance *qua* appearance? We have robbed the phenomenon of its being, in order to give it to consciousness, and we expected consciousness subsequently to return it. Is consciousness able to do that? By examining the ontological requirements of the *percipi*, we will find out. 24

We should note at the outset that there is a being of the perceived thing *qua* perceived. Even if I wanted to reduce this table to a synthesis of subjective impressions, I would have to notice at least that it reveals itself as a table through that synthesis, of which it is the transcendent limit, the principle and the goal. The table stands before our knowledge, and it cannot be assimilated to the knowledge we gain from it; otherwise it would be consciousness – i.e. pure immanence – and would dissolve as a table. On the same grounds, even if what separates the table from the synthesis of subjective impressions through which it is apprehended is purely a distinction within reason, at least the table cannot be this synthesis: that would be to reduce it to a synthetic activity of combination.²⁶ In so far, then, as the known cannot be absorbed into our knowledge of

26 TN: ...une activité synthétique de liaison. Here I translate *liaison* as ‘combination’ (which is normally used to translate Kant’s *Verbindung* into English), as it is likely Sartre takes this phrase from Kant.

it, we must recognize its *being*. This *being*, we are told, is the *percipi*. Let us acknowledge from the outset that we can no more reduce the *being* of the *percipi* to that of the *percipiens* – i.e. to consciousness – than we can reduce the table to the combination of representations. The most we can say is that it is *relative* to that *being*. But this *relativity* does not excuse us from the need to inspect the *percipi*'s *being*.

Now, the mode of the *percipi* is *passive*. If, then, the phenomenon's *being* resides in its *percipi*, its *being* will be *passivity*. The characteristic structures of *esse*, in so far as it can be reduced to *percipi*, turn out to be *relativity* and *passivity*. What is *passivity*? I am *passive* when I undergo a modification of which I am not the origin – that is to say, neither the foundation nor the creator. Thus my *being* supports a way of *being* of which it is not the source. Only, to be able to support something, I still need to exist, and my existence is in consequence always located beyond *passivity*. For example, 'passively supporting' something is an attitude that I *uphold*, which engages my freedom just as much as 'resolutely rejecting' it. If I am to be forever 'the person who was offended', I must persevere in my *being*; in other words, I must assign existence to myself.²⁷ But, in so doing, I take up the offence on my own account in some way; I accept this offence, and I cease to be *passive* in relation to it. The result is this alternative: either I am not *passive* in my *being* – in which case I become the foundation of the ways I am affected, even if I was not at first their origin – or

25 I am characterized by *passivity* in my very existence, and my *being* is received – in which case everything collapses into nothingness. Hence *passivity* is a doubly relative phenomenon: relative to the agent's activity, and to the patient's existence. From this it follows that *passivity* does not involve the very *being* of the *passive* existent: it is a relation between one *being* and another *being*, and not between a *being* and a *nothingness*. It is impossible for the *percipere* to assign the *perceptum* its *being* because, in order to be assigned anything, the *perceptum* would already need to be given in some way and thus to exist before receiving its *being*. We may think in terms of *creation*, on condition that the created *being* takes possession of itself, and separates itself from its creator in order immediately to close in on itself and take up its *being*: it is in this sense that a book

27 TN: ... je m'affecte moi-même de l'existence. See my note on *s'affecter* in Notes on the Translation.

exists *against* its author. But if the act of creation needs to be continued indefinitely, if the created being is supported even in its minutest parts, if it has no proper independence, if it is in itself only nothingness, then the creature cannot be distinguished at all from its creator, but is reabsorbed within him; what we have here is a false transcendence, and the creator cannot even have the illusion of leaving his subjectivity behind.²⁸

Moreover, the passivity of the patient demands an equal passivity in the agent – this idea finds expression in the principle of action and reaction: it is because it is possible to crush my hand, to grasp it or to cut it that my hand can crush, cut or grasp. How much passivity should we attribute to perception, to knowledge? They are entirely active, entirely spontaneous. It is precisely because it is pure spontaneity, because nothing can bite into it, that consciousness cannot act on anything. Hence, the doctrine of *esse est percipi* requires that consciousness, a pure spontaneity unable to act on anything, should bestow being on a transcendent nothingness while preserving the nothingness of its being – and this is absurd. Husserl attempted to ward off these objections by introducing passivity into the *noësis*: namely the *hyle*,²⁹ the pure flux of what is lived through, the materiality of the passive syntheses. But all he did was to add a further difficulty to those we have mentioned. In effect, he reintroduced those neutral ‘givens’ whose impossibility we demonstrated earlier. Of course these are not ‘contents’ of consciousness, but that only adds to their unintelligibility. For the *hyle* cannot in fact belong to consciousness, or it would dissolve into translucency and be unable to provide the resistant impressionable³⁰ base that we surpass towards the object. But if it does not belong to consciousness, what is the source of its being and its opacity? How can it retain at one and the same time the opaque resistance of things and the subjectivity of thought? Since it is not even perceived, and since consciousness transcends it towards its objects, its *esse* cannot derive from a *percipi*. But if we say that it derives its essence only from itself, we return to the insoluble problem of how consciousness can relate to any independent existents. And even if we were

28 Sartre’s note: It is for this reason that the Cartesian doctrine of substance reaches its logical conclusion in Spinoza’s thought.

29 TN: For *hyle* see the section on Husserl vocabulary in Notes on the Translation.

30 TN: As *impressionnel* is not an ordinary French word, I translate it with a parallel (made-up) adjective, ‘impressional’.

to concede to Husserl that the noesis has a hyletic layer, we would still be unable to conceive how consciousness could transcend this subjective element towards objectivity. By endowing the *hyle* with the characteristics of a thing and the characteristics of consciousness, Husserl believed he could facilitate the passage from one to the other, but he succeeded only in creating a hybrid being that consciousness rejects, and which cannot be part of the world.

But in addition, as we saw, the *percipi* implies that relativity governs the being of the *perceptum*. Is it conceivable that the being of the known should be relative to our knowledge of it? What could the relativity of its being mean, in the case of an existent, other than that the existent's being lies in something other than itself, in other words in an existent that it is not? Admittedly, it is not inconceivable for a being to be external to itself, if we take this to mean that the being is its own externality. But that is not the case here. The perceived being stands before a consciousness that it cannot penetrate and that cannot make contact with it and, as it is cut off from consciousness, it exists cut off from its own existence. It is no use to claim, as Husserl did, that it is unreal: even if the status of what is perceived is unreal, it has to exist.

Thus there is no case in which either of the two determinations of *relativity* and *passivity* – which concern ways of being – is applicable to being itself. The *esse* of the phenomenon cannot be its *percipi*. The transphenomenal being of consciousness cannot provide the foundation for the phenomenon's transphenomenal being. We can see the phenomenologists' mistake: having correctly reduced the object to the series of its combined appearances, they thought they had reduced its being to the succession of its ways of being. That is why they tried to explain being in terms of concepts which apply only to ways of being, because they refer to relations between a plurality of beings that already exist.

V

THE ONTOLOGICAL PROOF

We have not given being its due: we thought that our discovery of the transphenomenality of the being of consciousness excused us from the need to grant any transphenomenal being to the phenomenon. On the contrary, as we will see, the transphenomenality of consciousness actually requires the

phenomenon's being to be transphenomenal. We can derive an 'ontological proof', not from the reflective *cogito*, but from the *prereflective* being of the *percipiens*. Let us try to set it out here.

All consciousness is consciousness of something. We can take this definition of consciousness in two quite distinct ways: we can take it to mean either that consciousness is constitutive of its object's being, or that consciousness is in its innermost nature related to a transcendent being. But the first interpretation of the phrase destroys itself: to be conscious of something is to confront a full and concrete presence that is *not* consciousness. Doubtless, one can be conscious of an absence. But that absence must necessarily appear against a ground of presence. Now, as we have seen, consciousness is a real subjectivity, and an impression is a subjective plenitude. But this subjectivity cannot step outside itself in order to posit a transcendent object by conferring upon it the plenitude of the impression. If, therefore, we want at any cost to make the phenomenon's being depend on consciousness, the object will need to distinguish itself from consciousness not through its *presence*, but through its *absence*, not through its plenitude, but through its nothingness. If being belongs to consciousness, the object must differ from consciousness not in so far as it is another being, but in so far as it is a non-being. Here we have the recourse to the infinite that we discussed in the first section of this work. For Husserl, for example, the animation of the hyletic core by only those intentions which find their fulfilment³¹ (*Erfüllung*) in that *hyle* is not sufficient to take us out of the domain of subjectivity. The genuinely objectifying intentions³² are empty intentions, intentions that aim, beyond the present and subjective appearance, at the infinite totality of the series of appearances. Let us be clear, moreover, that these intentions aim at them as appearances that cannot ever be given all at the same time. The fact that it is necessarily impossible for the infinite number of terms in the series to stand before consciousness simultaneously, in conjunction with the fact that all but one of these terms is really absent, is the foundation of objectivity. If these impressions were present – even if their number were infinite – they would become merged into

31 TN: ...trouver leur remplissement ... See my note on *remplir* in the section on Husserl vocabulary in Notes on the Translation.

32 TN: *Les intentions ... objectivantes* ... See my note on *objectiver* in the section on Husserl vocabulary in Notes on the Translation.