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PREFACE

What is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins—as 'an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. It is the search for a philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide. Yet Husserl in his last works mentions a 'genetic

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THE COGITO

I am thinking of the Cartesian *cogito*, wanting to finish this work, feeling the coolness of the paper under my hand, and perceiving the trees of the boulevard through the window. My life is constantly thrown headlong into transcendent things, and passes wholly outside me. The *cogito* is either this thought which took shape three centuries ago in the mind of Descartes, or the meaning of the books he has left for us, or else an eternal truth which emerges from them, but in any case is a cultural being of which it is true to say that my thought strains towards it rather than that it embraces it, as my body, in a familiar surrounding, finds its orientation and makes its way among objects without my needing to have them expressly in mind. This book, once begun, is not a certain set of ideas; it constitutes for me an open situation, for which I could not possibly provide any complex formula, and in which I struggle blindly on until, miraculously, thoughts and words become organized by themselves. *A fortiori* the sensible forms of being which lie around me, the paper under my hand, the trees before my eyes, do not yield their secret to me, rather is it that my consciousness takes flight from itself and, in them, is unaware of itself. Such is the initial situation that realism tries to account for by asserting an actual transcendence and the existence in itself of the world and ideas.

There is, however, no question of justifying realism, and there is an element of final truth in the Cartesian return of things or ideas to the self. The very experience of transcendent things is possible only provided that their project is borne, and discovered, within myself. When I say that things are transcendent, this means that I do not possess them, that I do not circumambulate them; they are transcendent to the extent that I am ignorant of what they are, and blindly assert their bare existence. Now what meaning can there be in asserting the existence of one knows not what? If there can be any truth at all in this assertion, it is in so far as I catch a glimpse of the nature or essence to which it refers, in so far, for instance, as my vision of the tree as a mute *ek-stase* into an individual thing already envelops a certain thought about seeing and a certain thought about the tree. It is, in short, in so far as I do not merely encounter the tree, am not simply confronted with it, but discover in this existent before me a certain nature, the notion of which I actively evolve. In so far as I find things round about me, this cannot be because they are actually there, for, *ex hypothesi*, I can know nothing of this factual existence. The fact that I am capable of recognizing it is attributable to my actual contact with the thing, which awakens within me a primordial knowledge of all things, and to my finite and determinate perceptions' being partial manifestations of a power of knowing which is coextensive with the world and unfolds it in its full extent and depth. If we imagine a space in itself with which the perceiving subject contrives to coincide, for example, if I imagine that my hand perceives the distance between two points as it spans it, how could the angle formed by my fingers, and indicative of that distance, come to be judged, unless it were so to speak measured out by the inner operation of some power residing in neither object, a power which, *ipso facto*, becomes able to know, or rather effect, the relation existing between them? If it be insisted that the 'sensation in my thumb' and that in my first finger are at any rate 'signs' of the distance, how could these sensations come to have in themselves any means of signifying the relationship between points in space, unless they were already situated on a path running from one to the other, and unless this path in its turn were not only traversed by my fingers as they open, but also 'aimed at' by my thought pursuing its intelligible purpose? 'How could the mind know the significance of a sign which it has not itself

constituted as a sign?'¹ For the picture of knowledge at which we arrived in describing the subject situated in his world, we must, it seems, substitute a second, according to which it constructs or constitutes this world itself, and this one is more authentic than the first, since the transactions between the subject and the things round about it are possible only provided that the subject first of all causes them to exist for itself, actually arranges them round about itself, and extracts them from its own core. The same applies with greater force in acts of spontaneous thought. The Cartesian *cogito*, which is the theme of my reflection, is always beyond what I bring to mind at the moment. It has a horizon of significance made up of a great number of thoughts which occurred to me as I was reading Descartes and which are not now present, along with others which I feel stirring within me, which I might have, but never have developed. But the fact that it is enough to utter these three syllables in my presence for me to be immediately directed towards a certain set of ideas, shows that in some way all possible developments and clarifications are at once present to me. 'Whoever tries to limit the spiritual light to what is at present before the mind always runs up against the Socratic problem. "How will you set about looking for that thing, the nature of which is totally unknown to you? Which, among the things you do not know, is the one which you propose to look for? And if by chance you should stumble upon it, how will you know that it is indeed that thing, since you are in ignorance of it?" (*Meno*, 80D.)² A thought really transcended by its objects would find them proliferating in its path without ever being able to grasp their relationships to each other, or finding its way through to their truth. It is I who reconstitute the historical *cogito*, I who read Descartes' text, I who recognize in it an undying truth, so that finally the Cartesian *cogito* acquires its significance only through my own *cogito*, and I should have no thought of it, had I not within myself all that is needed to invent it. It is I who assign to my thought the objective of resuming the action of the *cogito*, and I who constantly verify my thought's orientation towards this objective, therefore my thought must forestall itself in the pursuit of this aim, and must

¹ P. Lachièze-Rey, *Réflexions sur l'activité spirituelle constituante*, p. 134.

² P. Lachièze-Rey, *L'Idéalisme kantien*, pp. 17-18.

already have found what it seeks, otherwise it would not seek it. We must define thought in terms of that strange power which it possesses of being ahead of itself, of launching itself and being at home everywhere, in a word, in terms of its autonomy. Unless thought itself had put into things what it subsequently finds in them, it would have no hold upon things, would not think of them, and would be an 'illusion of thought'.³ A sensible perception or a piece of reasoning cannot be facts which come about in me and of which I take note. When I consider them after the event, they are dispersed and distributed each to its due place. But all this is merely what is left in the wake of reasoning and perception which, seen contemporaneously, must necessarily, on pain of ceasing to hang together, take in simultaneously everything necessary to their realization, and consequently be present to themselves with no intervening distance, in one indivisible intention. All thought of something is at the same time self-consciousness, failing which it could have no object. At the root of all our experiences and all our reflections, we find, then, a being which immediately recognizes itself, because it is its knowledge both of itself and of all things, and which knows its own existence, not by observation and as a given fact, nor by inference from any idea of itself, but through direct contact with that existence. Self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action. The act whereby I am conscious of something must itself be apprehended at the very moment at which it is carried out, otherwise it would collapse. Therefore it is inconceivable that it should be triggered off or brought about by anything whatsoever; it must be *causa sui*.⁴ To revert with Descartes from things to thought about things is to take one of two courses: it is either to reduce experience to a collection of psychological events, of which the I is merely the overall name or the hypothetical cause, in which case it is not clear how my existence is more certain than that of any thing, since it is no longer immediate, save at a fleeting instant; or else it is to recognize as anterior to events a field and a system of thoughts which is subject neither to time nor to any other limitation, a mode of existence owing nothing to the event and which is existence as consciousness, a

³ P. Lachièze-Rey, *L'Idéalisme kantien*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

spiritual act which grasps at a distance and compresses into itself everything at which it aims, an 'I think' which is, by itself and without any adjunct, an 'I am'.⁵ 'The Cartesian doctrine of the *cogito* was therefore bound to lead logically to the assertion of the timelessness of mind, and to the acceptance of a consciousness of the eternal: *experimur nos aeternos esse*.'⁶ Accordingly eternity, understood as the power to embrace and anticipate temporal developments in a single intention, becomes the very definition of subjectivity.⁷

Before questioning this interpretation of the *cogito* in terms of eternity, let us carefully observe what follows from it, as this will show the need of some rectification. If the *cogito* reveals to me a new mode of existence owing nothing to time, and if I discover myself as the universal constituent of all being accessible to me, and as a transcendental field with no hidden corners and no outside, it is not enough to say that my mind, 'when it is a question of the form of all the objects of sense . . . is the God of Spinoza',⁸ for the distinction between form and matter can no longer be given any ultimate value, therefore it is not clear how the mind, reflecting on itself, could in the last analysis find any meaning in the notion of receptivity, or think of itself in any valid way as undergoing modification: for if it is the mind itself which thinks of itself as affected, it does not think of itself thus, since it affirms its activity afresh simultaneously with appearing to restrict it: in so far, on the other hand, as it is the mind which places itself in the world, it is not there, and the self-positing is an illusion. It must then be said, with no qualification, that my mind is God. How can M. Lachièze-Rey, for example, have avoided this consequence? 'If, having suspended thinking, I resume it again, I return to life, I reconstitute, in its indivisibility, and by putting myself back at the source whence it flows, the movement which I carry on. . . . Thus, whenever he thinks, the subject makes himself his point of support, and takes his place, beyond and behind his various representations, in that unity which, being the principle of all recognition, is not there to be recognized, and he becomes

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁷ P. Lachièze-Rey, *Le Moi, le Monde et Dieu*, p. 68.

⁸ Kant, *Übergang*, Adickes, p. 756, quoted by Lachièze-Rey, *L'Idéalisme kantien*, p. 464.

once more the absolute because that is what he eternally is.⁹ But how could there be several absolutes? How in the first place could I ever recognize other (my)selves? If the sole experience of the subject is the one which I gain by coinciding with it, if the mind, by definition, eludes 'the outside spectator' and can be recognized only from within, my *cogito* is necessarily unique, and cannot be 'shared in' by another. Perhaps we can say that it is 'transferable' to others.¹⁰ But then how could such a transfer ever be brought about? What spectacle can ever validly induce me to posit outside myself that mode of existence the whole significance of which demands that it be grasped from within? Unless I learn within myself to recognize the junction of the *for itself* and the *in itself*, none of those mechanisms called other bodies will ever be able to come to life; unless I have an exterior others have no interior. The plurality of consciousness is impossible if I have an absolute consciousness of myself. Behind the absolute of my thought, it is even impossible to conjecture a divine absolute. If it is perfect, the contact of my thought with itself seals me within myself, and prevents me from ever feeling that anything eludes my grasp; there is no opening, no 'aspiration'¹¹ towards an Other for this self of mine, which constructs the totality of being and its own presence in the world, which is defined in terms of 'self-possession',¹² and which never finds anything outside itself but what it has put there. This hermetically sealed self is no longer a finite self. 'There is . . . a consciousness of the universe only through the previous consciousness of organization in the active sense of the word, and consequently, in the last analysis, only through an inner communion with the very working of godhead.'¹³ It is ultimately with God that the *cogito* brings me into coincidence. While the intelligible and identifiable structure of my experience, when recognized by me in the *cogito*, draws me out of the event and establishes me in eternity, it frees me simultaneously from all limiting attributes and, in fact, from that fundamental event which is my private existence. Hence the same reasoning which necessarily leads from the event to the act,

⁹ P. Lachièze-Rey, *Reflexions sur l'activité spirituelle constituante*, p. 145.

¹⁰ Id., *L'Idéalisme kantien*, p. 477.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 477. *Le Moi, le Monde et Dieu*, p. 83.

¹² *L'Idéalisme kantien*, p. 472.

¹³ *Le Moi, le Monde et Dieu*, p. 33.

from thoughts to the I, equally necessarily leads from the multiplicity of I's to one sole constituting consciousness, and prevents me from entertaining any vain hope of salvaging the finiteness of the subject by defining it as a 'monad'.¹⁴ The constituting consciousness is necessarily unique and universal. If we try to maintain that what it constitutes in each one of us is merely a microcosm, if we keep, for the *cogito*, the meaning of 'existential experience',¹⁵ and if it reveals to me, not the absolute transparency of thought wholly in possession of itself, but the blind act by which I take up my destiny as a thinking nature and follow it out, then we are introducing another philosophy, which does not take us out of time. What is brought home to us here is the need to find a middle course between eternity and the atomistic time of empiricism, in order to resume the interpretation of the *cogito* and of time. We have seen once and for all that our relations with things cannot be eternal ones, nor our consciousness of ourself the mere recording of psychic events. We perceive a world only provided that, before being facts of which we take cognizance, that world and that perception are thoughts of our own. What remains to be understood precisely is the way the world comes to belong to the subject and the subject to himself, which is that *cogitatio* which makes experience possible; our hold on things and on our 'states of consciousness'. We shall see that this does not leave the event and time out of account, but that it is indeed the fundamental mode of the event and *Geschichte*, from which objective and impersonal events are derived forms, and finally that any recourse we have to eternity is necessitated solely by an objective conception of time.

There can therefore be no doubt at all that I think. I am not sure that there is over there an ash-tray or a pipe, but I am sure that I think I see an ash-tray or a pipe. Now is it as easy as is generally thought to dissociate these two assertions and hold, independently of any judgement concerning the thing seen, the evident certainty of my 'thought about seeing'? On the contrary, it is impossible. Perception is precisely that kind of act in which there can be no question of setting the act itself apart from the end to which it is directed. Perception and the

¹⁴ As does M. Lachièze-Rey, *Le Moi, le Monde et Dieu*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 72.

perceived necessarily have the same existential modality, since perception is inseparable from the consciousness which it has, or rather is, of reaching the thing itself. Any contention that the perception is indubitable, whereas the thing perceived is not, must be ruled out. If I see an ash-tray, in the full sense of the word *see*, there must be an ash-tray there, and I cannot forego this assertion. To see is to see something. To see red, is to see red actively in existence. Vision can be reduced to the mere presumption of seeing only if it is represented as the contemplation of a shifting and anchorless *quale*. But if, as we have shown above, the very quality itself, in its specific texture, is the suggestion of a certain way of existing put to us, and responded to by us, in so far as we have sensory fields; and if the perception of a colour, endowed with a definite structure (in the way of surface colour or area of colour), at a place or distance away either definite or vague, presupposes our opening on to a reality or a world, how can we possibly dissociate the certainty of our perceptual existence from that of its external counterpart? It is of the essence of my vision to refer not only to an alleged visible entity, but also to a being actually seen. Similarly, if I feel doubts about the presence of the thing, this doubt attaches to vision itself, and if there is no red or blue there, I say that I have not really seen these colours, and concede that at no time has there been created that parity between my visual intentions and the visible which constitutes the genuine act of seeing. We are therefore faced with a choice: either I enjoy no certainty with regard to things themselves, in which case neither can I be certain about my own perception, taken as a mere thought, since, taken even in this way, it involves the assertion of a thing. Or else I grasp my thought with certainty, which involves the simultaneous assumption of the existence towards which it is projected. When Descartes tells us that the existence of visible things is doubtful, but that our vision, when considered as a mere thought of seeing is not in doubt, he takes up an untenable position. For thought about seeing can have two meanings. It can in the first place be understood in the restricted sense of alleged vision, or 'the impression of seeing', in which case it offers only the certainty of a possibility or a probability, and the 'thought of seeing' implies that we have had, in certain cases, the experience of genuine or actual vision to which the idea of seeing bears a resemblance and in which the certainty of the thing was, on those occasions, involved. The

certainty of a possibility is no more than the possibility of a certainty, the thought of seeing is no more than seeing mentally, and we could not have any such thought unless we had on other occasions really seen. Now we may understand 'thought about seeing' as the consciousness we have of our constituting power. Whatever be the case with our empirical perceptions, which may be true or false, these perceptions are possible only if they are inhabited by a mind able to recognize, identify and sustain before us their intentional object. But if this constituting power is not a myth, if perception is really the mere extension of an inner dynamic power with which I can coincide, my certainty concerning the transcendental premises of the world must extend to the world itself, and, my vision being in its entirety thought about seeing, then the thing seen is in itself what I think about it, so that transcendental idealism becomes absolute realism. It would be contradictory to assert¹⁶ both that the world is constituted by me and that, out of this constitutive operation, I can grasp no more than the outline and the essential structures; I must see the existing world appear at the end of the constituting process, and not only the world as an idea, otherwise I shall have no more than an abstract construction, and not a concrete consciousness, of the world. Thus, in whatever sense we take 'thought about seeing', it is certain only so long as actual sight is equally so. When Descartes tells us that sensation reduced to itself is always true, and that error creeps in through the transcendent interpretation of it that judgement provides, he makes an unreal distinction: it is no less difficult for me to know whether or not I have felt something than it is to know whether there is really something there, for the victim of hysteria feels yet does not know what it is that he feels, as he perceives external objects without being aware of that perception. When, on the other hand, I am sure of having felt, the certainty of some external thing is involved in the very way in which the sensation is articulated and unfolded before me: it is a pain in the leg, or it is red,

¹⁶ As Husserl, for example, does when he concedes that any transcendental reduction is at the same time an eidetic one. The necessity of proceeding by essences, and the stubborn opacity of existences, cannot be taken for granted as facts, but contribute to determining the significance of the *cogito* and of ultimate subjectivity. I am not a constituting thought, and my 'I think' is not an 'I am', unless by thought I can equal the world's concrete richness, and re-absorb facticity into it.

and this may be an opaque red on one plane, or a reddish three-dimensional atmosphere. The 'interpretation' of my sensations which I give must necessarily be motivated, and be so only in terms of the structure of those sensations, so that it can be said with equal validity either that there is no transcendent interpretation and no judgement which does not spring from the very configuration of the phenomena—or that there is no sphere of immanence, no realm in which my consciousness is fully at home and secure against all risk of error. The acts of the I are of such a nature that they outstrip themselves leaving no interiority of consciousness. Consciousness is transcendence through and through, not transcendence undergone—we have already said that such a transcendence would bring consciousness to a stop—but active transcendence. The consciousness I have of seeing or feeling is no passive noting of some psychic event hermetically sealed upon itself, an event leaving me in doubt about the reality of the thing seen or felt. Nor is it the activation of some constituting power superlatively and eternally inclusive of every possible sight or sensation, and linking up with the object without ever having to be drawn away from itself. It is the actual effecting of vision. I reassure myself that I see by seeing this or that, or at least by bringing to life around me a visual surrounding, a visible world which is ultimately vouched for only by the sight of a particular thing. Vision is an action, not, that is, an eternal operation (which is a contradiction in terms) but an operation which fulfils more than it promises, which constantly outruns its premises and is inwardly prepared only by my primordial opening upon a field of transcendence, that is, once again, by an *ek-stase*. Sight is achieved and fulfils itself in the thing seen. It is of its essence to take a hold upon itself, and indeed if it did not do so it would not be the sight of anything, but it is none the less of its essence to take a hold upon itself in a kind of ambiguous and obscure way, since it is not in possession of itself and indeed escapes from itself into the thing seen. What I discover and recognize through the *cogito* is not psychological immanence, the inherence of all phenomena in 'private states of consciousness', the blind contact of sensation with itself. It is not even transcendental immanence, the belonging of all phenomena to a constituting consciousness, the possession of clear thought by itself. It is the deep-seated momentum of transcendence which is my very being, the

simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world's being.

And yet is not the case of perception a special one? It throws me open to a world, but can do so only by outrunning both me and itself. Thus the perceptual 'synthesis' has to be incomplete; it cannot present me with a 'reality' otherwise than by running the risk of error. It is absolutely necessarily the case that the thing, if it is to be a thing, should have sides of itself hidden from me, which is why the distinction between appearance and reality straightway has its place in the perceptual 'synthesis'. It would seem, on the other hand, that consciousness comes back into its rights and into full possession of itself, if I consider my awareness of 'psychic facts'. For example, love and will are inner operations; they forge their own objects, and it is clear that in doing so they may be sidetracked from reality and, in that sense, mislead us; but it seems impossible that they should mislead us about themselves. From the moment I feel love, joy or sadness, it is the case that I love, that I am joyful or sad, even when the object does not in fact (that is, for others or for myself at other times) have the value that I now attribute to it. Appearance is, within me, reality, and the being of consciousness consists in appearing to itself. What is willing, if it is not being conscious of an object as valid (or as valid precisely in so far as it is invalid, in the case of perverse will), and what is loving other than being conscious of an object as lovable? And since the consciousness of an object necessarily involves a knowledge of itself, without which it would escape from itself and fail even to grasp its object, to will and to know that one wills, to love and know one loves are one and the same act; love is consciousness of loving, will is consciousness of willing. A love or a will unaware of itself would be an unloving love, or an unwilling will, as an unconscious thought would be an unthinking one. Will or love would seem to be the same whether their object be artificial or real and, considered independently of the object to which they actually refer, they would appear to constitute a sphere of absolute certainty in which truth cannot elude us. Everything is, then, truth within consciousness. There can never be illusion other than with regard to the external object. A feeling, considered in itself, is always true once it is felt. Let us, however, look at the matter more closely.

It is, in the first place, quite clear that we are able to discriminate,

within ourselves, between 'true' and 'false' feelings, that everything felt by us as within ourselves is not *ipso facto* placed on a single footing of existence, or true in the same way, and that there are degrees of reality within us as there are, outside of us, 'reflections', 'phantoms' and 'things'. Besides true love, there is false or illusory love. This last case must be distinguished from misinterpretations, and those errors in which I have deceitfully given the name of love to emotions unworthy of it. For in such cases there was never even a semblance of love, and never for a moment did I believe that my life was committed to that feeling. I conspired with myself to avoid asking the question in order to avoid receiving the reply which was already known to me; my 'love'-making was an attempt to do what was expected of me, or merely deception. In mistaken or illusory love, on the other hand, I was willingly united to the loved one, she was for a time truly the vehicle of my relationships with the world. When I told her that I loved her, I was not 'interpreting', for my life was in truth committed to a form which, like a melody, demanded to be carried on. It is true that, following upon disillusionment (the revelation of my illusion about myself), and when I try to understand what has happened to me, I shall find beneath this supposed love something other than love: the likeness of the 'loved' woman to another, or boredom, or force of habit, or a community of interests or of convictions, and it is just this which will justify me in talking about illusion. I loved only qualities (that smile that is so like another smile, that beauty which asserts itself like a fact, that youthfulness of gesture and behaviour) and not the individual manner of being which is that person herself. And, correspondingly, I was not myself wholly in thrall, for areas of my past and future life escaped the invasion, and I maintained within me corners set aside for other things. In that case, it will be objected, I was either unaware of this, in which case it is not a question of illusory love, but of a true love which is dying—or else I did know, in which case there was never any love at all, even 'mistaken'. But neither is the case. It cannot be said that this love, while it lasted, was indistinguishable from true love, and that it became 'mistaken love' when I repudiated it. Nor can it be said that a mystical crisis at fifteen is without significance, and that it becomes, when independently evaluated in later life, an incident of puberty or the first signs of a religious vocation. Even if I reconstruct my whole life on the basis of

some incident of puberty, that incident does not lose its contingent character, so that it is my whole life which is 'mistaken'. In the mystical crisis itself as I experienced it, there must be discoverable in it some characteristic which distinguishes vocation from incident: in the first case the mystical attitude insinuates itself into my basic relationship to the world and other people; in the second case, it is within the subject as an impersonal form of behaviour, devoid of inner necessity: 'puberty'. In the same way, true love summons all the subject's resources and concerns him in his entire being, whereas mistaken love touches on only one person: 'the man of forty' in the case of late love, 'the traveller' in the case of exotic appeal, 'the widower' if the misguided love is sustained by a memory, 'the child' where the mother is recalled. True love ends when I change, or when the object of affection changes; misguided love is revealed as such when I return to my own self. The difference is intrinsic. But as it concerns the place of feeling in my total being-in-the-world, and as mistaken love is bound up with the person I believe I am at the time I feel it, and also as, in order to discern its mistaken nature I require a knowledge of myself which I can gain only through disillusionment, ambiguity remains, which is why illusion is possible.

Let us return to the example of the hysterical subject. It is easy to treat him as a dissembler, but it is first of all himself whom he deceives, and this instability once more poses the problem we are trying to dispose of; how can the victim of hysteria not feel what he feels, and feel what he does not feel? He does not feign pain, sadness or anger, yet his fits of 'pain', 'sadness' or 'rage' are distinguishable from 'real' cases of these afflictions, because he is not wholly given over to them: at his core there is left a zone of tranquillity. Illusory or imaginary feelings are genuinely experienced, but experienced, so to speak, on the outer fringes of ourselves.¹⁷ Children and many grown people are under the sway of 'situational values', which conceal from them their actual feelings—they are pleased because they have been given a present, sad because they are at a funeral, gay or sad according to the countryside around them, and, on the hither side of any such emotions, indifferent and neutral. 'We experience the feeling itself keenly, but

¹⁷ Scheler, *Idole der Selbsterkenntnis*, pp. 63 and ff.

inauthentically. It is, as it were, the shadow of an authentic sentiment.' Our natural attitude is not to experience our own feelings or to adhere to our own pleasures, but to live in accordance with the emotional categories of the environment. 'The girl who is loved does not project her emotions like an Isolde or a Juliet, but feels the feelings of these poetic phantoms and infuses them into her own life. It is at a later date, perhaps, that a personal and authentic feeling breaks the web of her sentimental phantasies.'¹⁸ But until this feeling makes its appearance, the girl has no means of discovering the illusory and literary element in her love. It is the truth of her future feelings which is destined to reveal the misguideness of her present ones, which are genuinely experienced. The girl 'loses her reality'¹⁹ in them as does the actor in the part he plays, so that we are faced, not with representations or ideas which give rise to real emotions, but artificial emotions and imaginary sentiments. Thus we are not perpetually in possession of ourselves in our whole reality, and we are justified in speaking of an inner perception, of an inward sense, an 'analyser' working from us to ourselves which, ceaselessly, goes some, but not all, the way in providing knowledge of our life and our being. What remains on the hither side of inner perception and makes no impression on the inward sense is not an unconscious. 'My life', my 'total being' are not dubious constructs, like the 'deep-seated self' of Bergson, but phenomena which are indubitably revealed to reflection. It is simply a question of what we are doing. I make the discovery that I am in love. It may be that none of those facts, which I now recognize as proof of my love, passed unnoticed by me; neither the quickened drive of my present towards my future, nor that emotion which left me speechless, nor my impatience for the arrival of the day we were to meet. Nevertheless I had not seen the thing as a whole, or, if I had, I did not realize that it was a matter of so important a feeling, for I now discover that I can no longer conceive my life without this love. Going back over the preceding days and months, I am made aware that my thoughts and actions were polarized, I pick out the course of a process of organization, a synthesis in the making. Yet it is impossible to pretend that I always knew what I now know, and to see

¹⁸ Scheler, *Idole der Selbsterkenntnis*, pp. 89-95.

¹⁹ J. P. Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 243.

as existing, during the months which have elapsed, a self-knowledge which I have only just come by. Quite generally, it is as impossible to deny that I have much to learn about myself, as it is to posit ahead of time, in the very heart of me, a knowledge of myself containing in advance all that I am later destined to know of myself, after having read books and had experiences at present unsuspected by me. The idea of a form of consciousness which is transparent to itself, its existence being identifiable with its awareness of existing, is not so very different from the notion of the unconscious; in both cases we have the same retrospective illusion, since there is, introduced into me as an explicit object, everything that I am later to learn concerning myself. The love which worked out its dialectic through me, and of which I have just become aware, was not, from the start, a thing hidden in my unconscious, nor was it an object before my consciousness, but the impulse carrying me towards someone, the transmutation of my thoughts and behaviour—I was not unaware of it since it was I who endured the hours of boredom preceding a meeting, and who felt elation when she approached—it was lived, not known, from start to finish. The lover is not unlike the dreamer. The 'latent content' and the 'sexual significance' of the dream are undoubtedly present to the dreamer since it is he who dreams his dream. But, precisely because sexuality is the general atmosphere of the dream, these elements are not thematized as sexual, for want of any non-sexual background against which they may stand out. When we ask ourselves whether or not the dreamer is conscious of the sexual content of his dream, we are really asking the wrong question. If sexuality, as we have explained above, is indeed one of our ways of entering into a relationship with the world, then whenever our meta-sexual being is overshadowed, as happens in dreams, sexuality is everywhere and nowhere; it is, in the nature of the case, ambiguous and cannot emerge clearly as itself. The fire which figures in the dream is not, for the dreamer, a way of disguising the sexual drive beneath an acceptable symbol, since it is only in the waking state that it appears as a symbol; in the language of dreams, fire is the symbol of the sexual drive because the dreamer, being removed from the physical world and the inflexible context of waking life, uses imagery only in proportion as it has affective value. The sexual significance of the dream is neither unconscious nor 'conscious'.

because the dream does not 'signify', as does waking life, by relating one order of facts to another, and it is as great a mistake to see sexuality as crystallized in 'unconscious representations' as it is to see lodged in the depths of the dreamer a consciousness which calls it by its true name. Similarly, for the lover whose experience it is, love is nameless; it is not a thing capable of being circumscribed and designated, nor is it the love spoken of in books and newspapers, because it is the way in which he establishes his relations with the world; it is an existential signification. The criminal fails to see his crime, and the traitor his betrayal for what they are, not because they exist deeply embedded within him as unconscious representations or tendencies, but because they are so many relatively closed worlds, so many situations. If we are in a situation, we are surrounded and cannot be transparent to ourselves, so that our contact with ourselves is necessarily achieved only in the sphere of ambiguity.

But have we not overshot our mark? If illusion is possible in consciousness on some occasions, will it not be possible on all occasions? We said that there are imaginary sentiments to which we are committed sufficiently for them to be experienced, but insufficiently for them to be authentic. But are there any absolute commitments? Is it not of the essence of commitment to leave unimpaired the autonomy of the person who commits himself, in the sense that it is never complete, and does it not therefore follow that we have no longer any means of describing certain feelings as authentic? To define the subject in terms of existence, that is to say, in terms of a process in which he transcends himself, is surely by that very act to condemn him to illusion, since he will never be able to be anything. Through refraining, in consciousness, from defining reality in terms of appearance, have we not severed the links binding us to ourselves, and reduced consciousness to the status of a mere appearance of some intangible reality? Are we not faced with the dilemma of an absolute consciousness on the one hand and endless doubt on the other? And have we not by our rejection of the first solution, made the *cogito* impossible? This objection brings us to the crucial point. It is true neither that my existence is in full possession of itself, nor that it is entirely estranged from itself, because it is action or doing, and because action is, by definition, the violent transition from what I have to what I aim to have, from what I am to what I intend to

be. I can accomplish the *cogito* and have assurance of genuinely willing, loving or believing, provided that in the first place I actually do will, love or believe, and thus accomplish my own existence. If this were not so, an ineradicable doubt would spread over the world, and equally over my own thoughts. I should be for ever wondering whether my 'tastes', 'volitions', 'desires' and 'ventures' were really mine, for they would always seem artificial, unreal and unfulfilled. But then this doubt, not being an actual doubt, could no longer even manage to confer the absolute certainty of doubting.²⁰ The only way out, and into 'sincerity', is by forestalling such scruples and taking a blind plunge into 'doing'. Hence it is not because I think I am that I am certain of my existence: on the contrary the certainty I enjoy concerning my thoughts stems from their genuine existence. My love, hatred and will are not certain as mere thoughts about loving, hating and willing: on the contrary the whole certainty of these thoughts is owed to that of the acts of love, hatred or will of which I am quite sure because I perform them. All inner perception is inadequate because I am not an object that can be perceived, because I make my reality and find myself only in the act. 'I doubt': there is no way of silencing all doubt concerning this proposition other than by actually doubting, involving oneself in the experience of doubting, and thus bringing this doubt into existence as the certainty of doubting. To doubt is always to doubt something, even if one 'doubts everything'. I am certain of doubting precisely because I take this or that thing, or even every thing and my own existence too, as doubtful. It is through my relation to 'things' that I know myself; inner perception follows afterwards, and would not be possible had I not already made contact with my doubt in its very object. What has been said of external can equally be said of internal perception: that it involves infinity, that it is a never-ending synthesis which, though always incomplete, is nevertheless self-affirming. If I try to verify my perception of the ash-tray, my task will be endless, for this perception takes for granted more than I can know in an explicit way.

²⁰ '... in which case, that too, that cynical distaste at her own persona, was deliberately put on! And that scorn for the distaste which she was busy contriving, was so much playing too! And her doubt about her scorn... it was maddening. Once you started being sincere, was there no end to it?' S. de Beauvoir, *L'Invité*, p. 232.

Similarly, if I try to verify the reality of my doubt, I shall again be launched into an infinite regress, for I shall need to call into question my thought about doubting, then the thought about that thought, and so on. The certainty derives from the doubt itself as an act, and not from these thoughts, just as the certainty of the thing and of the world precedes anythetic knowledge of their properties. It is indeed true, as has been said, that to know is to know that one knows, not because this second order of knowing guarantees knowledge itself, but the reverse. I cannot reconstruct the thing, and yet there are perceived things. In the same way I can never coincide with my life which is for ever fleeing from itself, in spite of which there are inner perceptions. For the same reason I am open to both illusion and truth about myself: that is, there are acts in which I collect myself together in order to surpass myself. The *cogito* is the recognition of this fundamental fact. In the proposition: 'I think, I am', the two assertions are to be equated with each other, otherwise there would be no *cogito*. Nevertheless we must be clear about the meaning of this equivalence: it is not the 'I am' which is pre-eminently contained in the 'I think,' not my existence which is brought down to the consciousness which I have of it, but conversely the 'I think,' which is re-integrated into the transcending process of the 'I am', and consciousness into existence.

It is true that it seems necessary to concede my absolute coincidence with myself, if not in the case of will and feeling, at least in acts of 'pure thought'. If this were the case, all that we have said would appear to be challenged, so that, far from appearing as a mere manner of existence, thought would truly monopolize us. We must now, therefore, consider the understanding. I think of the triangle, the three-dimensional space to which it is supposed to belong, the extension of one of its sides, and the line that can be drawn through its apex parallel to the opposite side, and I perceive that this line, with the apex, forms three angles the sum of which is equal to the sum of the angles of the triangle, and equal, moreover, to two right angles. I am sure of the result which I regard as proved; which means that my diagrammatic construction is not, as are the strokes arbitrarily added by the child to his drawing, each one of which completely transforms its meaning ('it's a house; no, it's a boat; no, it's a man'), a collection of lines fortuitously drawn by my hand. The process from start to finish has a triangle in view. The genesis of

the figure is not construction as appearance in the essence of t

suggested by the ill-defined figure which is actually there on the paper. I am aware of presenting a proof, because I perceive a necessary link between the collection of data which constitute the hypothesis and the conclusion which I draw from them. It is this necessity which ensures that I shall be able to repeat the operation with an indefinite number of empirical figures, and the necessity itself stems from the fact that at each step in my demonstration, and each time I introduced new relationships, I remained conscious of the triangle as a stable structure conditioned, and left intact, by them. This is why we can say, if we want, that the proof consists in bringing the sum of the angles constructed into two different groupings, and seeing that sum alternately as equal to the sum of the angles of the triangle, and equal to two right angles,²¹ but it must be added²² that here we have not merely two successive configurations, the first of which eliminates the second (as is the case with the child sketching dreamily); the first survives for me while the second is in process of establishing itself, the sum of angles which I equate with two right angles is the same as I elsewhere equate with the sum of the angles of the triangle, all of which is possible only provided that I go beyond the order of phenomena or appearances and gain access to that of the *eidos* or of being. Truth would seem to be impossible unless one enjoys an absolute self-possession in active thought, failing which it would be unable to unfold in a set of successive operations, and to produce a permanently valid result.

There would be neither thought nor truth but for an act whereby I prevail over the temporal dispersal of the phases of thought, and the mere *de facto* existence of my mental events. The important thing, however, is fully to understand the nature of this act. The necessity of the proof is not an analytic necessity: the construction which enables the conclusion to be reached is not really contained in the essence of the triangle, but merely possible when that essence serves as a starting

²¹ Wertheimer, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Gestalttheorie: die Schlussprozesse im produktiven Denken*.

²² A. Gurwitsch, *Quelques aspects et quelques développements de la théorie de la Forme*, p. 460.