

SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN KANT AND SARTRE

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1. The pre-reflective *cogito*

The pre-reflective cogito ... is the necessary condition of the Cartesian cogito and any other sort of self-conscious reflection, for it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible (*Being and Nothingness* xxix).

The *I think* must be *able* to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me. (*Critique of Pure Reason* B131-2)

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* I.IV.vi)

The consciousness of oneself in accordance with the determinations of our state in internal perception is merely empirical, forever variable; it can provide no standing or abiding self in this stream of inner appearances, and is customarily called inner sense or empirical apperception. (A107)

Thus if that concept, by means of the term 'substance', is to indicate an object that can be given, and if it is to become a cognition, then it must be grounded on a persisting intuition ... But now we have in inner intuition nothing at all that persists, for the I is only the consciousness of my thinking ... and the simplicity of substance that is bound up with the objective reality of this concept completely falls away and is transformed into a merely logically qualitative unity of self-consciousness in thinking in general. (B412-3, cf. B407, B421-2)

When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*. There is consciousness of *the-streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken*, etc., and non-positional consciousness of consciousness. ... There is no place for *me* on this level. And this is not a matter of chance, due to a momentary lapse of attention, but happens because of the very structure of consciousness. ... The *I* is not given as a concrete moment, a perishable structure of my actual consciousness. On the contrary, it affirms its permanence beyond this consciousness and all consciousnesses, and - although it scarcely resembles a mathematical truth - its type of existence comes much nearer to that of eternal truths than to that of consciousness. (*The Transcendence of the Ego* 49-50)

2. Pure and impure reflection

Pure reflection ... keeps to the given without setting up claims for the future. This can be seen when someone, after having said in anger, "I detest you", catches himself and says, "It is not true, I do not detest you, I said that in anger." We see here two reflections: the one, impure and conniving, which effects there and then a passage to the infinite, and which through the *Erlebnis* abruptly constitutes hatred as its transcendent object; the other, pure, merely descriptive, which disarms the unreflected consciousness by granting its instantaneousness. (TE 64-5)

Pure reflection, the simple presence of the reflective for-itself to the for-itself reflected-on, is at once the original form of reflection and its ideal form; it is that on whose foundation impure reflection appears, it is also that which is never first *given*; and it is that which must be won by a sort of catharsis. (B&N 155)

... it is impure reflection which constitutes the succession of psychic facts or psyche. What is given first in daily life is impure or constituent reflection although this includes pure reflection as part of its structure. (B&N 159-160)

It follows that my freedom is the unique foundation of values and that *nothing*, absolutely nothing, justifies me in adopting this or that particular value, this or that particular scale of values. As a being by whom values exist, I am unjustifiable. My freedom is anguished at being the foundation of values while itself without foundation. (B&N 38)

3. Self-knowledge and freedom

I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only *that I am*. This representation is a thinking, not an intuiting (B157, with my emphasis).

The combination of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses...for it is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation, and, since one must call the latter understanding...all combination...is an action of the understanding which we would designate with the general title synthesis. (B129–30; cf. A97, A126-7)

In fact, it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity with duty rested simply on moral grounds and on the representation of one's duty. It is indeed sometimes the case that with the keenest self-examination we find nothing besides the moral ground of duty that could have been powerful enough to move us to this or that good action and to so great a sacrifice; but from this it cannot be inferred with certainty that no covert impulse of self-love, under the mere pretence of that idea, was not actually the determining cause of the will; for we like to flatter ourselves by falsely attributing to ourselves a nobler motive (*Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* 4:407)

This command is "know" (scrutinize, fathom) yourself", not in terms of your natural perfection ... but rather in terms of your moral perfection in relation to your duty. That is, know your heart - whether it is good or evil, whether the source of your actions is pure or impure. ... Moral cognition of oneself, which seeks to penetrate into the depths (the abyss) of one's heart which are quite difficult to fathom, is the beginning of all human wisdom. (*The Metaphysics of Morals* 6:441)

The being of consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question. This means that the being of consciousness does not coincide with itself in a full equivalence. ... Thus by the sole fact that my belief is apprehended as belief, it is *no longer only belief*: that is, it is already no longer belief, it is troubled belief. (B&N 74-5)

By the sole fact that I am conscious of the reasons (*motifs*) which inspire my action, these reasons are already transcendent objects of my consciousness; they are outside. In vain shall I try to catch them; I escape them by my very existence. I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the reasons and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. (B&N 439)