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Memory and Reflexive Awareness

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I. Introduction

This paper focuses on two interrelated problems: Does consciousness essentially involve self-awareness? Does self-awareness imply the existence of a self? I will answer yes to both questions, but my yes for the second question will be a qualified one.

I plan to address these two problems by counterpoising two distinct philosophical traditions and debates. The first is the debate over reflexive awareness (*svasamvedana*) in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. The second is the debate between egological versus nonegological conceptions of consciousness in Western phenomenology.¹

2. Does Consciousness Essentially Involve Self-Awareness?

2.a *The Self-Awareness Thesis*

One of the central theses found in the phenomenological tradition is that intentionality (the object-directedness of consciousness) essentially involves

¹ A full treatment would require situating these two debates in relation to at least two other broad debates in Western and Indian philosophy—higher-order theories of consciousness versus same-order theories (see the papers collected in Genarro 2004, and Kriegel and Winniford 2006), and reflectionist/other-illumination (*paraprakāśā*) theories of self-awareness (e.g. Nyāya) versus reflexivist/self-illumination (*svaprakāśā*) theories (e.g. Yogācāra). But space demands that I set aside these debates here. See Mackenzie (2007) and Ram-Prasad (2007: 51–99) for further discussion.

self-awareness. Put another way, intentional experience is also necessarily self-experience. The following quotations all express this thesis:

Every experience is ‘consciousness’, and consciousness is ‘consciousness of’ . . . But every experience is *itself experienced* [*erlebt*], and *to that extent* also ‘conscious’ [*bewußt*].

(Husserl 1991: 291)

[C]onsciousness is consciousness of itself. This is to say that the type of existence of consciousness is to be consciousness of itself. And consciousness is aware of itself *in so far as it is consciousness of a transcendent object*.

(Sartre 1991: 40)

[T]he necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object, is that it be consciousness of itself as being that knowledge.

(Sartre 1956: liii)

Every consciousness exists as consciousness of existing.

(Sartre 1956: liv)

All thought of something is at the same time self-consciousness, failing which it could have no object.

(Merleau-Ponty 1962: 371)

Exactly what kind of self-consciousness is at issue here? If intentional experience is also necessarily self-experience, what sort of self-experience are we talking about?

2.b Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness

Phenomenologists stand united in rejecting higher-order theories of consciousness (e.g. Rosenthal 2005) and reflectionist/other-illumination (*para-prakāśa*) theories of self-awareness (see MacKenzie 2007; Ram-Prasad 2007: 51–99). According to these theories, self-awareness is the product of a second-order cognitive state taking a distinct, first-order mental state as its intentional object. Phenomenologists from Husserl onwards have, instead, maintained both that intentional experience is pre-reflectively self-aware and that pre-reflective self-awareness is not a kind of transitive (object-directed) consciousness (see Zahavi 2005). In other words, every intentional experience both presents (or re-presents) its intentional object and discloses itself, but this self-disclosure is intransitive. The kind of intransitivity of concern here is not a hidden or suppressed transitivity, in the way ‘I sing’ is

intransitive (where it still makes sense to ask, ‘What are you singing?’), but rather an absolute intransitivity, in the way ‘I jump’ is intransitive (where it makes no sense to ask, ‘What are you jumping?’) (Legrand 2009). Although the ‘what question’ can arise for the transitive component of an intentional experience, it cannot arise for the intransitive component of pre-reflective self-awareness. In sum, according to this view, every transitive consciousness of an object is pre-reflectively and intransitively self-conscious. Or as Sartre would say, ‘all positional consciousness of an object is necessarily a nonpositional consciousness of itself’ (Sartre 1967: 114).²

2.c *The Argument from Time-Consciousness*

In the phenomenological tradition, this conception of intransitive and pre-reflective self-consciousness is closely connected to considerations about time-consciousness and temporality. According to Husserl (1991), the phenomenological structure of time-consciousness entails pre-reflective self-awareness. In our consciousness of temporal phenomena (duration, change, sequence, etc.), three intentional processes work together and cannot operate on their own apart from one another—primal impression, retention, and protention. For example, for each now-phase of a melody, each currently sounding note, there is (i) a corresponding primal impression directed exclusively toward that now-phase, (ii) a retention directed toward the just-elapsed phase of the melody, the just-heard notes, and (iii) a protention of the immediate future phase, the notes of the melody intended as just-about-to-occur. For simplicity, take retention. Any given now-phase of consciousness retains the just-past phases of its intentional object only by retaining the just-past phases of its consciousness of the object: I am aware of the notes of the melody as slipping into the past only through my awareness of the notes as having just been heard by me. Thus, not only is consciousness aware of itself in retention, but it must be retentionally self-aware in order

² Cf. also these passages: ‘[T]he object with its characteristic opacity is before consciousness, but consciousness is purely and simply consciousness of being consciousness of that object. This is the law of its existence. We should add that this consciousness of consciousness—except in the case of reflective consciousness . . . is not positional, which is to say that consciousness is not for itself its own object’ (Sartre 1991: 40–41). ‘We understand now why the first consciousness of consciousness is not positional; it is because it is one with the consciousness of which it is consciousness. At one stroke it determines itself as consciousness of perception and as perception . . . This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness, but as *the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something*’ (Sartre 1956: liv).

to be aware of objects across time. This retentional self-awareness is not a form of transitive consciousness (object-directed intentionality): it is rather an intransitive reflexivity, a passive self-relatedness. In this way, time-consciousness entails pre-reflective self-awareness. More precisely, internal time-consciousness—our implicit awareness of our experiences as flowing in time—is most fundamentally the pre-reflective self-awareness of the stream of consciousness (see Zahavi 2005: Chapter 3).

2.d The Reflexive Awareness Thesis

I turn now to Buddhist philosophy. In certain schools of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, we also find the view that consciousness or awareness is reflexive (Williams 1998; Yao 2005). The Sanskrit term is *svasamvedana*, which has been variously translated as reflexive awareness, self-awareness, and self-cognition. Buddhist philosophical systems that accept this notion explain that it means a cognition's being aware of itself simultaneously with its awareness of an object, and that this kind of self-awareness or reflexive awareness is nondual, that is, it does not involve any subject/object structure (see Sopa and Hopkins 1976: 78). The analogy or simile often used is that of a light, which in its illumination of objects also illuminates itself (see Williams 1998; Yao 2005).

2.e Setting Aside Representationalism

In Buddhist philosophy, the reflexive awareness thesis is associated with what Western philosophers would call representationalism in the theory of perception. According to Dignāga (c.480–540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (c.600–660 CE), cognition does not apprehend its object nakedly, but rather through an aspect (*ākāra*), which is the phenomenal form of the object left imprinted on cognition. Because the immediate object of cognition is the phenomenal aspect, and the phenomenal aspect is internal to the cognition, every cognition is directed toward a feature of itself, simply in virtue of being directed toward its immediate object. Thus cognition is reflexive, because in the process of revealing external things (by way of the aspect), cognition also reveals itself (see Dreyfus 1997; Dunne 2004).

I mention this traditional connection to representationalism in order to set it aside. From the standpoint of my concerns about self-consciousness in this paper, we can separate the reflexive awareness thesis from representationalism.

It is the reflexive awareness thesis as a phenomenological thesis that is my concern here.³

2.f *Śāntaraksita On Reflexive Awareness*

I will focus on reflexive awareness as Śāntaraksita (725–788 CE) understands it (Blumenthal 2004). My reason for choosing Śāntaraksita is that he maintains that the nature of consciousness is reflexive awareness.⁴ Śāntaraksita states that reflexive awareness is what distinguishes sentience from insentience: The nature of consciousness is reflexive awareness and that which is not reflexively aware is insentient (*The Ornament of the Middle Way* 16, translated by Blumenthal 2004: 237). To the objection that an act cannot be directed toward itself but must be directed toward an object, he replies that reflexive awareness does not have an agent-action-object structure. In other words, the reflexive (self-related) aspect of awareness is intransitive.

2.g *The Memory Argument*

One of the main arguments for the reflexive awareness thesis is the so-called memory argument, which seems to have originated with Dignāga but is widely discussed by those who advocate the reflexive awareness thesis as well as those who deny it (Williams 1998: 9–10; Yao 2005: 115–117). According to this argument, memory requires previous experience: when one recollects one recalls both the *object* perceived and that *I* have perceived this object, thus no additional higher-order or reflective cognition is required in order to recall the subjective side of the experience (my perceiving), hence reflexive self-awareness or self-cognition belonged to the original experience (i.e. the original experience was not simply one of *perceiving the object*, but also one of *experiencing oneself perceiving the object*).

This classical formulation of the argument is egological because it involves the explicit I-cognition, ‘I have perceived this object.’ It is also possible, however, to reformulate the argument nonegologically without any explicit I-cognition: Memory requires previous experience: when one

³ The reflexive awareness thesis in Buddhist philosophy is also associated with what Western philosophers would call idealism in metaphysics (the view that there are no extra-mental objects). For further discussion of idealism in Buddhism, see Siderits (2007: 146–179).

⁴ By ‘nature’ Śāntaraksita means conventional distinguishing characteristic of consciousness, not ultimate intrinsic nature, because as a Mādhyamika philosopher he rejects the view that phenomena, including mental phenomena, have ultimate intrinsic natures.

recollects one recalls both the *object* perceived and the past *seeing* of this object, thus no additional higher-order or reflective cognition is required in order to recall the subjective side of the experience (the seeing), hence reflexive self-awareness or self-cognition belonged to the original experience (i.e. the original experience was not simply one of *perceiving the object* but also one of *experiencing the seeing of the object*).

The nonegological conception is preferable at this stage of our discussion, for we do not wish to prejudge the issue of whether reflexive experience is egological. This issue—egological versus nonegological conceptions of consciousness—will be taken up later in this paper.

It will be useful to have a more formal presentation of the memory argument. Here is my reconstruction of the argument as it is presented by Śāntarākṣita and understood by his Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika critics (whose criticisms we will shortly examine):⁵

1. When one remembers (say) yesterday's vivid blue sky, one remembers not simply the blue sky, but also seeing the blue sky. In other words, one remembers not just the object seen, but also the visual experience of seeing. Thus the memory comprises both the objective side of the perception (the object seen) and the subjective side of the perception (the seeing). (Phenomenological claim)
2. Thus no additional cognition is necessary in order to recall the subjective side of the original experience. (Phenomenological claim)
3. To remember something one must have experienced it. (Conceptual claim)
4. The causal basis for features of the present memory is corresponding features of the past experience. (Causal claim)
5. So the past visual perception must have included an experience of the seeing, along with the object seen. In other words, the perception must have included an awareness of itself as a visual perception, which is to say that it must have been reflexively self-aware. (Conclusion)

Whether this argument is deductively valid or sound is debatable. I propose, however, to view the argument as an inference to the best explanation.

⁵ Note that I say 'reconstruction' because I make no claim that my presentation coincides with traditional presentations of the argument by either its advocates or its critics. I do claim, however, that my reconstruction captures the philosophical premises and reasoning that constitute the heart of the argument.

Given the first and second premises as phenomenological evidence, the best explanation for this evidence (so the argument claims) is the hypothesis of reflexive awareness. Understood this way, I find the argument persuasive. To explain why, I turn now to consider criticisms of the memory argument, which I will argue are unsuccessful.

2.h Objections to the Memory Argument

In a recent article, Jay Garfield (2006) presents and endorses two objections to the memory argument made by the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika philosophers Candrakīrti (c.600–650 CE), Śāntideva (c.650–750 CE), and Tsong Khapa (1357–1419) (who, as Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas, reject reflexive awareness).

First objection: Premise 1 is not proven. The premise assumes that the current memory must be the memory of one's being conscious (being visually aware), rather than simply the memory of that of which one was conscious (the object). But this claim about memory needs to be established.

Second objection: Premise 4 is not proven. It has not been shown that reflexive awareness is ever a cause of memory, or that the only plausible cause of memory is reflexive awareness. Furthermore, an alternative and simpler explanation is available: One sees the blue sky without being reflexively aware of one's seeing; this perception causes a subsequent memory of the blue sky, and on this basis one infers that one was visually aware of the sky. On this view, one infers the subjective side of the original perception; it is not given directly to memory, and hence it was not present reflexively in the original perceptual experience.

Here is Śāntideva's analogy as presented by Garfield: 'A bear is hibernating and is bitten by a rat. He develops an infection at the site of the wound. When he awakes in the spring he experiences the pain of the infected wound and knows on that basis that he experienced a rat bite, even though at the time he was *not aware* that he was experiencing the bite' (Garfield 2006: 210).

To reply to these objections I will draw from Husserl's analyses of memory. Although Williams (1998: 237) states that he is not familiar with the Buddhist memory argument from any Western context, Husserl (1991, 2005) advances similar considerations in his writings on memory and time-consciousness.

2.i *Reply to the First Objection*

The first premise of the memory argument makes a phenomenological claim about memory: When I remember yesterday's blue sky there is a memory of blue and a memory of seeing blue. The objection is that this claim about memory needs to be established. One way to establish, or at least support, this claim is to ground it on a phenomenological account of memory. Husserl provides what we need in the form of a phenomenological analysis of the intentional structure of episodic memory.

Let me begin with Husserl's distinction between intentional acts of presentation and re-presentation (Marbach 1993: chs. 2 and 3). Perception is presentational; imagination and memory are re-presentational. We can approach this distinction from two sides, the side of the intentional object and the side of the intentional act. In a perceptual experience, such as the perception of a blue pot on the table, the object is experienced as present in its 'bodily being' and thus as directly accessible—one can view it from different vantage points, pick it up and examine it more closely, and so on. In a re-presentational experience, such as the visual memory of the blue pot, the object is not experienced as present and accessible in this way, but as absent. Yet this absence is precisely a *phenomenal absence*, for the experience is of the object *precisely as absent*. This difference on the side of the intentional object between bodily presence and absence corresponds to the difference on the side of the intentional act between presentation and re-presentation. A re-presentational experience intends its object precisely as both phenomenally absent in its bodily being, and as mentally evoked or brought forth. In this way, the object is said to be mentally re-presented, rather than perceptually presented. It is important to note that what makes the experience re-presentational is precisely that its object is mentally evoked or brought forth, while also being phenomenally absent; it is not that the object is mentally evoked or brought forth again. The latter characteristic belongs to memory, but not to creative imagination or free fantasy.

In episodic memory, a situation or event is experienced not as present but as past, and thus absent. Therefore, the past situation or event is necessarily re-presented by the intentional cognition that takes it as its object. The phenomenological question is how this re-presentation subjectively works. According to image theories of memory, in remembering, one

apprehends a mental image of something experienced in the past. One problem with these theories is that in memory one does not take oneself to be imagining something that seems like what one remembers (an image or picture of what one remembers): one takes oneself to be remembering the object itself that was once present or the event itself that once occurred. The standard way to deal with this problem is to insist that what one remembers is the past occurrence, not the mental image, but that one remembers the past by way of the mental image. But this move highlights a deeper problem, which is that image theories fail to account for how an image had in the present can yield a memory experience as of something past. Husserl's account of memory as the re-presentation of a past experience aims to overcome this difficulty (Bernet 2002; Marbach 1993: 78–83).

Husserl submits that when one remembers a past occurrence, situation, or event, one also implicitly remembers one's earlier experience of that occurrence, situation, or event. Thus, in memory, one apprehends something (the absent past), not by means of an image—in the sense of a mental picture that exists in the present—but through the mental activity of re-presenting an experience believed to have occurred in the past. Of course, one does not have to entertain this belief explicitly in the episodic memory experience. Rather, in remembering, the re-presented experience is simply subjectively given as having occurred in the past. In memory, one reproduces and relives, as it were, this past experience, but in a modified way, namely, precisely as re-presented, and thus as not occurring now but posited as past. In other words, the past experience is not literally or really reproduced in the present, but is rather reproduced as part of the intentional content of the memory (Marbach 1993: 61). In Husserl's formulation, the present memory does not 'really' contain the past experience, but instead contains it only intentionally and in this way 'intentionally implicates' it (Husserl 1983: 294; Marbach 1993: 34–36, 69–70).⁶

On this view, to remember X is to intend or refer or mentally direct oneself to X by re-presenting an experience of X that is subjectively given as having occurred in the past (or, in a more cognitivist vein, that is believed to

⁶ It is important to note that such intentional implication is not thought to involve inference. The idea is rather that, in remembering, one relives, as it were, the past experience, which comprises both its intentional object and its prereflective and intransitive self-awareness.

have occurred in the past). Notice that the intentional object of the memory is usually the past occurrence (X), not the past experience of it. In other words, it is usually the objective side of the experience (the noema in phenomenological parlance), not the subjective side (the noesis). If the intentional object of the memory is the past experience as such, that is, the subjective side of the experience, then the memory is a reflective memory. Usually, however, the re-presenting of the past experience figures only implicitly and pre-reflectively in one's memory of the past event or situation. In this way, the memory is unreflective.

Husserl maintains that the phenomenal temporal distance between the present and the past is possible only insofar as the present act of remembering evokes both the object and the elapsed consciousness of it. If we suppose that the act of remembering reproduces only the past object, then we cannot explain how this object retains its character of being past or belonging to the past. Yesterday's blue sky is gone, so the only way to reproduce it is in the form of an image. But if yesterday's blue sky appeared only as a mental image apprehended in the present, then how could this image retain the character of pastness? The reason the object recollected in the present retains its character of pastness is that the remembering consciousness comprises two distinct intentional acts—the present act of bringing back the past object, and the past perception of that object. Once again, the present remembering does not really contain the past perception: it contains it only intentionally. The experience of remembering thus involves a kind of doubling of consciousness, for in being the conscious re-presentation of a past object, remembering is also the conscious re-presentation of a previous consciousness. It is precisely this doubling that accounts for the past remaining separated from the present, even though it is remembered in the present (Bernet 2002; Stawarska 2002).

This account of memory clearly grounds the phenomenological claim made in Premise 1 of the memory argument: The memory of yesterday's blue sky intentionally implicates yesterday's experience of seeing the blue sky. Therefore, unless the opponent of the memory argument can provide a superior, or at least equally satisfactory, alternative analysis of the phenomenology of memory, Premise 1 can be taken as an established phenomenological datum about memory in need of explanation. The reflexive awareness

thesis—the conclusion of the memory argument—purports to provide that explanation.⁷

2.j Reply to the Second Objection

This objection claims to offer an alternative and better explanation of memory than does the reflexive awareness thesis. On the basis of one's present memory of the past object one knows by inference that one was aware of the object, without that awareness needing to have been self-aware at the time of its occurrence.

The groundwork for replying to this objection has already been laid in the reply to the first objection. The alternative proposal does not account for the phenomenological structure of episodic memory.

According to the proposal, (i) one is subject to an occurrence (a rat bite, a visual cognition of blue); (ii) one lacks any awareness of the occurrence when it happens; (iii) the occurrence causes one later to be aware of some of its effects (pain from the bite, a memory image of blue); and (iv) those effects (as well as others) induce in one a cognitive state directed at the earlier occurrence.

These conditions, however, are not sufficient to account for the experience of memory, specifically for how past experience appears from the first-person perspective in the experience of remembering. To refer mentally to the past (iv) on the basis of the awareness of a mental image in the present (iii) is like reading the date-stamp on a letter and on that basis thinking about the date on which the letter was sent. What is missing here is precisely an experience of the past in the sense of an experience with the phenomenal (intuitional) content of pastness.

According to Husserl, as we have seen, this phenomenal content comes from the past experience being part of the intentional structure of the memory of the object. Memory is not thinking about the past on the basis of present marks (like tree rings or time stamps), it is re-presenting the past by, or through, re-presenting past experience. Thus the reflexive awareness

⁷ Of course, here I go well beyond anything that Śāntarakṣita explicitly endorses. Indeed, he might not accept the kind of phenomenological reasoning I employ here. My aim, however, is not to offer an account of how Śāntarakṣita might reply to Garfield's objections to the memory argument, but rather to show that Husserlian phenomenology can provide an effective reply to these objections.

thesis (underwritten by Husserl's phenomenology) provides a better account of memory than the alternative.

In the first part of this paper I have defended the memory argument for reflexive awareness against Garfield's (2006) criticisms. The question that now arises—especially given the enlistment of Husserlian phenomenology in support of the memory argument—is whether reflexive awareness implies a self. Or to put the question another way, is reflexive awareness compatible with the doctrinal Buddhist insistence on no-self?

3. Does Self-Awareness Imply the Existence of a Self?

The Buddhist answer to the question of whether self-awareness entails a self is clearly No when 'self' means an enduring entity (one that is wholly present from moment to moment) with an existence separate or somehow distinct from the series of psychophysical events (Dreyfus this volume; MacKenzie 2008). Consciousness alone is the subject of experience. Moreover, according to some views, every conscious experience is momentary and discrete, so strictly speaking there is no persisting subject (no subject that exists for more than one discrete moment). Other views, however, identify the subject with the continuum as a whole, rather than any particular stage of the continuum. In either case, the subject of experience is not equivalent to a self because 'self' is understood to mean a type of subject—one that endures with separate existence. Of course, according to the Buddhist view, it is precisely this type of subject that we mistakenly take ourselves to be as a result of deep-seated cognitive and emotional processes of identification with the psychophysical complex as a self (Albahari 2006).

Certainly, if we subscribe to this distinction between self and subject, then the reflexive awareness thesis and its supporting memory argument do not imply the existence of a self. But is this sharp distinction between self and subject philosophically sustainable? Given that some concept of no-self (*anatta/anātman*) seems to be non-negotiable for the Buddhist, any philosopher who wishes to self-identify (as it were) as a Buddhist would seem to have no option but to account for subjectivity within one or another no-self paradigm (see Albahari 2006; Dreyfus this volume), or perhaps to deny subjectivity as understood here (Siderits this volume). The second option is

not one I can consider here. The first one, however, gives rise to a serious tension: The more we enrich the concept of the subject—for example, through considerations about memory and time-consciousness—the more we reduce the conceptual distance between the self and the subject (or subjectivity) of experience.⁸

Let me be more specific. The price to pay for the Husserlian shoring up of the memory argument for reflexive awareness is a robust notion of subjectivity, one that considerably lessens the distance between the notion of a mere subject of experience and a self. In this phenomenological account of memory, the subject (or subjectivity) of experience is precisely the selfhood (ipseity) of time-consciousness—the pre-reflective self-awareness of the stream of consciousness as a stream, including the automatic givenness of past experience from within as one's own past experience in retention (primary memory) and remembering (secondary or reproductive memory).

Of course, this phenomenological notion of selfhood is far from the notion of the self as an enduring entity distinct from the flow of mental and physical events. But no phenomenologist would allow that this highly restricted notion of the self should be our touchstone for assessing the phenomenological and metaphysical status of the self (see Zahavi 2005; this volume).⁹

3.a A Nonegological Conception of Consciousness

A challenge now presents itself from within phenomenology in the form of the so-called nonegological conception of consciousness (Gurwitsch 1966). Whereas Husserl thought that phenomenological analysis revealed a transcendental ego abiding through the intentional activities of consciousness, Sartre denied that the stream of consciousness has an ego at its source. Much of the egological versus nonegological debate turns on how to understand the phenomenology of memory, so examining this debate will help to connect the self-no-self issue to our earlier considerations about memory and reflexive awareness.

⁸ MacKenzie (this volume) provides another option: The self is dependently originated but nonetheless real. I am greatly sympathetic to this approach.

⁹ For further criticism of the attempt to distinguish subject and self—criticism that appeals to the importance of the body and embodiment—see Henry and Thompson (in press).

Sartre held that the ego or 'I' is absent from unreflective consciousness. To quote one of his famous examples: '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' (Sartre 1991: 48–49). Only when we reflect on such experiences does the ego appear—but always as an object of the reflective act. The ego or 'I' is always an intentional object (hence transcendent) and never a (transcendental) subject: The ego belongs to the content of the reflected experience, whereas both the original unreflected experience and the act of reflection (itself an unreflected experience) lack an ego.

Sartre supports his nonegological position with considerations about memory (Sartre 1991: 43–48). He states that one can recall a past event in two ways: (i) one can focus on the object of the past experience (yesterday's blue sky), or (ii) one can focus on the past experience itself (yesterday's perception of the blue sky). The first kind of recollection, Sartre maintains, is impersonal or nonegological—it does not include an experience of the ego as the subject who perceived the object in the past. The second sort of recollection is reflective and egological—it takes the past act of consciousness as its object and gives rise to the illusion that this act was accompanied by an experience of the 'I' or ego.

How do we know that the past experience was not accompanied by an experience of the ego? Sartre thinks we can revive the past experience in memory, direct our attention to the revived past object without losing sight of the past unreflected experience, yet all the while not turn the memory into a reflective one, and thereby not objectify the past experience. When we, as it were, relive the past experience in this way we see clearly that no experience of the ego figured in its content.

Sartre's conclusion is that the ego does not pre-exist recollection but is a product of recollection. The ego is a kind of retrospective objectification. Objectifying recollection makes it seem as if the ego were there all along, but this appearance is illusory, for the ego is not present in consciousness at the moment when the perception takes place. Consciousness, therefore, at its basic unreflective level, is nonegological.

3.b *The Memory Argument Revisited*

We can now see why it was important in our earlier discussion of the memory argument not to work with the argument in its classical egological formulation. This formulation invokes reflective memory, that is, memory with an explicit I-cognition and first-person self-reference. Working with this formulation invites confusion because the memory argument at its strongest depends not on an appeal to reflective memory, but rather on an appeal to non-reflective memory—specifically, to the presence of the subjective side of the original experience in the non-reflective memory as showing that there must have been a non-reflective reflexive awareness present in the original experience.

To appreciate this point we can consider three statements of the traditional memory argument. The first comes from Candrakīrti (who then goes on to criticize and reject the argument):

Suppose one argued as follows: One has to maintain that there is reflexive awareness because otherwise, when at a later time, I say, ‘I saw . . .’ and remember the remembered object, and when I think, ‘I saw’, there could not be a memory of the awareness of the object of that thought.

(as quoted by Garfield 2006: 203).

The second and third come from Paul Williams, explaining Tsong Khapa’s understanding of the argument (Tsong Khapa follows Candrakīrti in rejecting the argument):

Tsong Khapa explains, when we remember, the memory image is seen to be composed of ‘formerly this was seen’ and ‘it was seen *by me*’. Or, as Tsong Khapa expressed it elsewhere, when I remember that I truly saw blue there is a memory of blue and a memory of seeing blue. Thus in the original act there must have been a sensation of blue and also the sensation of seeing blue.

(Williams 1998: 238).

Notice that Candrakīrti’s formulation and the first of Williams’ glosses of Tsong Khapa’s formulation are egological in form. As Williams (1998: 237) observes, the type of memory of concern here is reflective memory. The second gloss of Tsong Khapa’s formulation is nonegological.

Here is my reason for belaboring this distinction. If we use the traditional egological formulation, then we run the risk of thinking mistakenly that the memory argument depends specifically on an appeal to reflective memory.

This mistake could lead to the further mistakes of thinking that the memory argument could be countered with Sartre's argument that an ego-experience was not present in the original experience, but rather only retrospectively seems to have been present to the reflective memory, and hence that the original experience was not self-aware. But, of course, this line of thought would miss the whole point of the memory argument. The aim of the argument is not to establish that an ego-experience in Sartre's sense was present in the original experience: on the contrary, it is to establish that the original experience was self-aware—where self-awareness is understood as an intransitive reflexivity. (Of course, this kind of reflexive self-awareness Sartre accepts in the form of his notion of non-positional self-consciousness.) The argument does not depend on any appeal to reflective memory: on the contrary, the argument depends fundamentally on considerations about non-reflective memory: In a non-reflective memory of yesterday's blue sky there is also a non-reflective memory from within of yesterday's seeing of the blue sky. Thus the reason to appeal to non-reflective memory in support of reflexive awareness is that non-reflective memory already automatically recalls the subjective side of the original experience, without needing any additional higher-order cognition or reflective memory.

3.c Memory, Ego, Self

If we use the term 'ego' in Sartrean fashion to refer to the self as an object for reflection, then unreflective experience is egoless. For Sartre, however, this kind of egolessness does not imply that unreflective consciousness lacks selfhood in any sense. On the contrary, as Sartre states: 'it is consciousness in its fundamental ipseity which, under certain conditions, allows the appearance of the ego as the transcendent phenomenon of that ipseity' (Sartre 1956: 103). As Dan Zahavi (2005: 115) notes, Sartre's fundamental move here is to distinguish between ego-as-object and self-as-subject. Thus, although unreflective consciousness is egoless, it is not selfless.

In certain respects, however, Sartre's treatment of memory and his understanding of selfhood are simplistic compared with Husserl's (see Stawarska 2004). These differences are relevant to the memory argument and the relation between subjectivity and the self.

On the one hand, Sartre emphasizes fresh memory over distant memory in his argument for the nonegological conception of consciousness. He

relies on the kind of reproductive remembering that rides on the retention of recent experience, as when you call back a just-elapsed experience and try to relive it.¹⁰ What this emphasis leaves out are the many other kinds of episodic memories from the more remote and distant past.

On the other hand, Sartre juxtaposes remembering an object to reflective memory of an experience. Only the latter, he suggests, presents past experience as my experience. What this juxtaposition leaves out is precisely the Husserlian point that remembering an object already intentionally implicates the past experience of that object. Indeed, the Husserlian insight is that the past experience must be intentionally implicated in the recollection of the object if the object is to retain the phenomenal character of pastness. Although the intentionally implicated past experience need not be given as mine in an objectified egological sense (as the experience of my ego), it is given from within as an experience formerly lived through first-personally, that is, by me.

For Zahavi, this kind of ‘first-personal givenness’ of consciousness suffices to make consciousness fundamentally egological rather than nonegological (see Zahavi 2005: 99–146). To some extent, however, the issue seems terminological. If ‘ego’ means self-as-object, as it does for Sartre, then Sartre’s nonegological conception seems compatible with Zahavi’s insistence that pre-reflective experience is not lived through anonymously, but rather first-personally. After all, to maintain, as Sartre does, that ipseity or non-positional self-awareness defines the very being of consciousness would seem to imply that consciousness cannot be fundamentally anonymous, but must be constitutively first-personal.

Of course, we can still ask, what exactly is the status of this ‘I’ or ‘me’? Here it may be possible to reconcile phenomenology and the Buddhist no-self paradigm. From a phenomenological perspective, there is no need to suppose that ‘I’ or ‘me’ corresponds to an enduring entity with an existence separate or somehow distinct from the stream of mind-body events. Rather, the ‘I’ picks out the stream from its own self-individuating phenomenal perspective. To use an Indian turn of phrase, we could say that the stream is fundamentally I-making (*ahamkāra*).

¹⁰ See Sartre (1991: 46): ‘For example, I was absorbed just now in my reading. I am going to try to reconstitute the circumstances of my reading, my attitude, the lines that I was reading. I am thus going to revive not only these external details but a certain depth of unreflected consciousness, since the objects could only have been perceived *by* that consciousness and since they remain relative to it’.

4. Conclusion

In this paper I have defended the memory argument for reflexive awareness, and the reflexive awareness thesis as a phenomenological thesis about the nature of consciousness. At the same time, I have suggested that mounting a proper defence of the memory argument requires a robust account of memory and subjectivity that puts pressure on certain versions of the Buddhist no-self (*anatta/anātman*) doctrine by lessening the distance between the subject and self.

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