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A Comparison between Enactivism and Sartre's Phenomenology

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In the last decades, several philosophical theories have been brought together under the name of 4E Cognition. 4E Cognition (embodied, embedded, enactive and extended) is a field of interdisciplinary research combining philosophy, neuroscience, psychology, the social sciences, and others, based on the idea that mental activity is structured by dynamic interactions between the brain, body, and environment (in both physical and social sense).¹ It brings together a series of approaches against neuro-centric and internalist approaches like computational and cognitive theories of mind.² Against classical cognitivism, the 4E theories argue that the mind is not a passive box receiving neutral physical stimuli from the environment and that mental processes are not merely skull-bound (embodiment). Rather, the mind seems intrinsically linked to bodily actions towards the environmental context (embeddedness, enactment),³ and it actively incorporates environmental structures such as symbols, tools, artefacts, media, cultural practices, norms, groups, or even institutions (extendedness).⁴ Moreover, the mind is not conceived as an extra-natural property, nor a psychic entity that emerges from the body; rather the 4E cognition movement understands the mental as a dynamic process comprised of body-environment interactions and loops. In this sense, this anti-Cartesian position extends the issue of consciousness (and cognition in general) beyond the brain and the head, including the body and its relations with the environment.

Despite the enormous interest aroused in recent years by these anti-cognitivist theories, one could say that this approach is not new. The 4E theories seem to be rather an evolution of what classical phenomenology

developed around the theme of corporeality during the twentieth century. There is nothing new under the sun in claiming that mental processes are formed starting from body-environment interactions, that perception and action are two sides of the same coin, and that through objects we can extend our consciousness and knowledge of the world. Of course, there are methodological differences, such as the strict connection between the 4E theories and the most recent developments in cognitive science and neuroscience; while classical phenomenology was based mainly – not exclusively – on the phenomenological analysis of the lived body in relation to the experienced world, the current results of the 4E theories are a mix of conceptual analysis and empirical investigation on how brain, body, and environment are linked together. Perhaps the most radical position from the 4E Cognition is enactivism. “Enacted” means that something is put into action, and regarding the mind, it means that the cognitive processes can be understood as a dynamic interaction between the embodied mind and various affordances offered by the environment.⁵ Some phenomenologists, like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, or psychologists like Gibson, have been interpreted as precursors of the enactivist approach.⁶

This paper aims to discuss similarities and differences between enactivism and Jean-Paul Sartre’s phenomenology, who is usually not taken into consideration as a paradigmatic example of the relationship between phenomenological investigations and the 4E theories. First, I will introduce the concept of enactivism, presenting three specific theories, namely, sensorimotor, autopoietic and radical enactivism. Then, I will analyze Sartre’s position on corporeality, focusing on his phenomenology of the body as “surpassed towards the world.” This will allow me to compare his phenomenological approach with some fundamental concepts of enactivism: perception-action unity, anti-representationalism and anti-internalism (sensorimotor and radical enactivism in particular), organism-environment interaction and sense-making cognition (autopoietic enactivism in particular). In this regard, I will show affinities but also methodological and ontological differences between the two approaches; more specifically, I will argue that enactivism risks to underestimate some aspects that a complete theory of consciousness and cognition should not avoid, that is, subjectivity and existential meaning. In this sense, a Sartrean phenomenological-existentialist approach can enrich those naturalized enactivist accounts of consciousness that are merely based on the biodynamic and sensorimotor interactions between organism and environment.

Varieties of Enactivism

As said above, enactivism is a radical approach according to which cognition and consciousness are specific modalities of the “structural coupling”⁷ between organism and environment. For an enactivist, it is not

enough for the mind to be embodied and embedded in an environmental context, as well as extended through the use of tools. The enactivist positions are possibly even more radical, as they claim that it is the dynamic interaction between the environment and the organism that makes mental processes possible. In other words, there is not a pre-given mind that can be extended and embedded beyond the brain towards/within a pre-given world, rather cognition is from the beginning an intrinsic interaction between the organism and the world. This organism-object coupling implies that there are no representations of the world nor private inner states in the head, rather we directly deal with environmental objects through our bodily skills and abilities. Thus, enactivism is mainly characterized by an anti-representationalist attitude, and some positions also support a strong direct realism, according to which we are immediately aware of external objects rather than through some kind of cognitive mediation.⁸

There are three principal ways of interpreting enactivism.⁹ The first one is the sensorimotor approach according to which consciousness and cognition are not something that human beings “have” but something they “do.”¹⁰ To explain this point, Noë proposed the metaphor of dance, suggesting that consciousness is not something that happens to our nervous tissues but something that we do with and through our body that is incorporated within an environment, as the act of dance is something we actively do with our body in relation with the dance-floor and the other people dancing with us.¹¹ According to the stronger version, the actual moving body is essential for experience,¹² while the weaker version argues that bodily movements as such are not necessary for the cognitive process, but rather the corresponding skills and practical knowledge (“know-how” instead of “know that”) a person has built up in the past, which are the enabling condition for performing a movement.¹³

The second version is the autopoietic enactive approach, which interprets the body not simply in a neuromuscular sense, but as a system with specific abilities to regulate its interaction with the world.¹⁴ Cognition (and consciousness) is understood more broadly as a sense-making process of an autonomous system that tries to preserve itself as a precarious form of life within a world full of potential interactions (and dangers).¹⁵ In this sense, the autopoietic enactivism sustains that the mind is neither a property nor a substance but a specific organizational structure of life and that all living beings (even single cellular organisms) have a mental structure by their being alive (mind/life continuity).¹⁶ The body, therefore, is essential as one of the sub-systems that bear interactions with the world in order to regulate the whole cognitive system as an autonomous sense-maker.

The third version, called radical enactive cognition (REC), analyzes the mind in terms of dynamic patterns of adaptive environmental interactions, trying to pursue an even stronger anti-cognitivism and anti-representationalism, for example, rejecting the sense-making processes that

“insert” meaning and significance in the organism/environment relationship and proposing a more basic biodynamic coupling without any propositionally specifiable content.¹⁷ Thus, there are no mental representations at all nor meanings in a classical sense, contrarily sensory-motor contingencies, bodily affects, postures, and movements enter cognition in a non-representational way.¹⁸

Despite the differences, these positions have some common points that characterize the enactivist approach, that is, the incompatibility with any sort of internalism (for example, content- or vehicle-internalism) and representationalism, the main emphasis on the structural coupling between organism and environment, the focus on bodily skills and sensorimotor knowledge in relation with the belief that perception is always related to action.

Sartre and Consciousness as Embodied-being-in-the-world

The 4E theories take up from a new perspective some of the typical themes of classical phenomenology. Now, I will go deeper into this point, analysing a specific phenomenological position, namely, Sartre’s account of bodily consciousness and its relationship with the world. First, I will rely on Sartre’s early phenomenological studies, from *The Imagination* (1936) to *Being and Nothingness* (1943), re-evaluating his complex analysis of corporeality, often unfairly overshadowed by the studies of (and on) Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. I will analyse bodily consciousness as intrinsically situated in and connected with the world, through a body that is often “surpassed” and “passed by in silence,” to use Sartre’s words. To build a bridge with contemporary studies of consciousness and the body, I will then compare Sartre’s phenomenological analysis with the key concepts of 4E Cognition. This will also lead me to consider the possibility that, to understand how we exist as our body, we need to understand first how we practically live in the world, seeking a new paradigm for the study of consciousness that is not founded either on the brain or body alone, but on our relationship with the world. This relationship may be called “embodied-being-in-the-world”¹⁹ and is similar to what nowadays is advocated by the 4E Cognition, in particular by enactivism.

Why Sartre?

Classical and contemporary phenomenology take the body into account as one of the main themes for a complete and reliable description of the experience, since there is no consciousness of the objects of the world without a body; even during instances of so-called disconnected consciousness, for example, in a dream or imagination, we cannot conceive ourselves completely

devoid of a body.²⁰ For this analysis, I will make use of Sartre's phenomenological ontology of the body. Someone might ask why Sartre and not Merleau-Ponty since the latter is known as perhaps the most important phenomenologist on the topic of the body; indeed some of his major works are specifically dedicated to the body and its relation with the world.²¹ Merleau-Ponty's works focused primarily on the body have likely overshadowed the bodily consciousness analysed by Sartre in the second chapter of the third part of *Being and Nothingness*.²² However, recently several authors²³ have argued for the importance of Sartre's contribution to the phenomenology of the body in relation with contemporary studies of embodied, embedded, extended and enactive cognition and against a neo-Cartesian interpretation of his works.²⁴

Another possible criticism might see Merleau-Ponty as the principal classical phenomenologist interested in combining phenomenological analyses with scientific findings, whereas Sartre is often depicted as an old-fashioned philosopher. This would lead to doubting whether Sartre is the most suitable phenomenologist to cite in a study that intends to dialogue with contemporary approaches like the 4E Cognition movement. But this is a mistaken criticism since Sartre seizes upon information deriving from the psychology of his time and early neuroscience, particularly in his early works.²⁵ Moreover, despite the categorical refusal to identify consciousness with the brain,²⁶ he has never denied the close relationship between the brain, body as whole and consciousness.²⁷ For these reasons, I consider Sartre's phenomenological analysis of the body a crucial contribution to the understanding of consciousness as an "embodied-being-in-the-world."

The Body Surpassed Towards the World

Starting with Sartre's account of body and consciousness, perhaps the term "relationship" might be misleading because it involves two different poles conjoined by some kind of nexus, for example, physical, psychophysical, phenomenal, etc. This is not the case since for Sartre consciousness is nothing but bodily consciousness; there is no difference between the intentional acts and the processes of the body so that to speak of "embodied consciousness is not to say that consciousness happens to ride around inside the body."²⁸ On the other hand, it would be a mistake to confuse this intrinsic relation between body and consciousness with the identity of the two, as if Sartre wanted to pursue a behavioral approach towards consciousness, or with the unification of two different dimensions.

In one sense therefore the body is a necessary characteristic of the for-itself; it is not true that the body is the product of an arbitrary decision on the part of a demiurge nor that the union of soul and body is the contingent bringing together of two substances radically distinct. On the contrary, the very nature of the for-itself demands that it be body; that is,

that, its nihilating escape from being should be made in the form of an engagement in the world.²⁹

For instance, Sartre considers the problem of the unification of mind and body a false problem, or what philosophers of mind call the “mind-body problem”; Sartre, instead of proposing a solution to it or claiming that it cannot be solved, argues for its dissolution. He shows how the attempt to put together our embodied experience and our material body – or the lived body (*le corps-existé*) and the body seen as an object (*le corps-vu*) – is an absurd attempt to unify two ontologically and not merely epistemically different dimensions: the body-for-me and the body-for-the-others.³⁰ This does not mean that we have two entities, as for substantial dualisms, indeed we are embodied and united from the start of our experience, however we cannot perceive this form of embodiment unless we completely change it from pre-reflective to reflective consciousness, making connections between the body as “lived” and the body as “had.” Thus, when we speak of the body-consciousness relation according to Sartre, this relation must be developed outside of any physicalist or dualist paradigm, because body and consciousness are two different diffractions of the same phenomenon, where the body stands for the sign (the means) through which intentionality (the meaning) expresses itself. There is no meaning without the sign/means but you must surpass the sign (which remains in the background) to see the meaning of it.³¹

This metaphor leads to another important point of the Sartrean phenomenology of the body, that is, the so-called lived body introduced by classical phenomenology (*le corps-existé* in the words of Sartre) is identical with the being-for-itself (*être pour-soi*; consciousness), therefore it is not something of which I constantly have consciousness, but it is “surpassed,” or nihilated, towards the world, as the pre-reflective non-positional consciousness of the revealing intentionality to the world. The body-for-itself “is never a given which I can know. It is there everywhere as surpassed; it exists only in so far as I escape it by nihilating myself.”³² Therefore it is nothing but the unseen condition of possibility of being-in-the-world:

Therefore my body is a conscious structure of my consciousness. But precisely because the body is the point of view on which there can not be a point of view, there is on the level of the unreflective consciousness no consciousness of the body. The body belongs then to the structures of the non-thetic self-consciousness. [...] Non-positional consciousness is consciousness (of the) body as being that which it surmounts and nihilates by making itself consciousness – i.e., as being something which consciousness is without having to be it and which it passes over in order to be what it has to be. In short, consciousness

(of) the body is lateral and retrospective; the body is the neglected, the “passed by in silence.” And yet the body is what this consciousness is; it is not even anything except body. The rest is nothingness and silence.³³

Thus, the body is the orientation, the hidden point of view and the permanent structure of the conscious being within the world, in such a way that everything I perceive or even imagine is not somewhere without any reference to me. The body “[...] is therefore in no way a contingent addition to my soul; on the contrary, it is a permanent structure of my being and a permanent condition of possibility for my consciousness as consciousness of the world.”³⁴ The world is not in front of me like an external and detached set of things; I am within it with a body that gives me the coordinates for the things of the world, so that the red tomato is on my left, while the door is behind me.

But when we say that the for-itself is-in-the-world, that consciousness is consciousness of the world, we must beware of thinking that the world exists confronting consciousness as an indefinite multiplicity of reciprocal relations which consciousness surveys without perspective and contemplates without a point of view. For me this glass is to the left of the decanter and a little behind it; for Pierre, it is to the right and a little in front.³⁵

In this sense, spatiality is rendered through the body, not as an abstract, centreless, independent space but as “hodological space,” that is, a lived situation as a field of forces of the experiencers in relation with the world and its objects.³⁶ When we are conscious of the red tomato, we can see it, touch it, taste it, weigh it with the hands, etc.; during these conscious acts of intentionality, at no time is the body revealed, the only intentional object is the red tomato, we do not see our eyes seeing, our fingers touching, our sense of taste tasting. When I weigh the tomato, I feel nothing but the tomato’s weight, in the same way as when I write my hand vanishes behind the words I am writing, “it is lost in the complex system of instrumentality in order that this system may exist. It is simply the meaning and the orientation of the system.”³⁷

Sartre and Enactivism

After this presentation, I will try to link Sartre’s account of bodily consciousness and its relationship with some core concepts of the enactivist approaches, as a tool for interpretation. Enactivism indeed presents elements that can be compatible with the Sartrean phenomenology, but also several differences.³⁸

The Perception-Action Unity

Enactivism – in particular the sensorimotor one – argues for a close relationship between perception and action, as Sartre also sustained in *Being and Nothingness*.

Thus the world from the moment of the upsurge of my For-itself is revealed as the indication of acts to be performed; these acts refer to other acts, and those to others, and so on. It is to be noted however that if from this point of view perception and action are indistinguishable, action is nevertheless presented as a future efficacy which surpasses and transcends the pure and simple perceived. [...] Perception is naturally surpassed toward action; better yet, it can be revealed only in and through projects of action. The world is revealed as an “always future hollow,” for we are always future to ourselves.³⁹

The fact that “perception is naturally surpassed toward action” reveals that for Sartre any object of the world is not passively perceived, rather actively reached, desired, awaited, searched, avoided, etc. by the agent’s intentionality. This means that the perceived object depends also by the perceiver’s set of potentially offered interactions, so that there is never only action or only perception, but it is two sides of the same coin. As Wider notes,⁴⁰ Noë comes to very similar conclusions when he claims that perception is a kind of skilful bodily activity, although he only cites thinkers like Merleau-Ponty, Husserl and Gibson.

Through attention, probing, and movements of the eyes, visual experience acquires content in much the same way that touch does. Vision, and touch, gain content through our skillful movements. We bring content to experience, by action. We enact content. [...] To summarize: Perceiving how things are is a mode of exploring how things appear. How they appear is, however, an aspect of how they are. To explore appearance is thus to explore the environment, the world. To discover how things are, from how they appear, is to discover an order or pattern in their appearances. The process of perceiving, of finding out how things are, is a process of meeting the world; it is an activity of skillful exploration.⁴¹

Furthermore, where Sartre speaks of the body as the foundation or the orientation that provides me all the potential interactions with the world (hodological space), Noë, in turn, speaks of sensorimotor contingencies, that is, the ground of possession of dispositions to respond to the presented object.⁴²

Nonetheless, while Noë (together with O'Regan) specifically focuses on the sensorimotor approach proposing an enactive interpretation of perception *per se*, the Sartrean phenomenological analysis is broader and full-bodied, where actions and spatial relations – as seen before – are only some of the features that constitute the body-world relation, since, for Sartre, every single object is not simply a source of sensorimotor information but also a whole set of meanings and possibilities for the agent.⁴³ As Solymosi noted, the dancing metaphor used to describe the sensorimotor enactivism seems to be “more about the body than the brain or the environment.”⁴⁴

Anti-representationalism and Anti-internalism

The next point concerns representations and mental states inside the head. In this regard, Sartre's anti-representationalist and anti-internalist conception of consciousness⁴⁵ can be compared to the “structural coupling” of organism and environment described by all the three enactivist approaches. According to Sartre, consciousness is completely devoid of contents, as an activity of pure directedness towards the world. This idea has been interpreted by Rowlands as the Intentionality Thesis, i.e. all consciousness is intentional,⁴⁶ and the No Content Thesis, i.e. necessarily, any object of consciousness is outside consciousness, which is structured by conscious acts, for example, thinking, imagining, remembering, perceiving, etc.⁴⁷ This leads to an anti-substantial and anti-idealist account of consciousness, in which consciousness is neither a sort of non-physical thing/psychic object/qualitative datum nor the foundation of the things in the world. Consciousness (*pour-soi*: being-for-itself) is intrinsically the disclosing activity (intentionality) to something transcendent to it, as something which is not consciousness (*en-soi*: being-in-itself), and this means that consciousness as intentionality necessarily needs to be supported by a being outside of it.⁴⁸ In other words, there is no consciousness without a world, understood as a collection of potential or actual objects for consciousness, which instead is a mode of existence, a pure activity within the world (“hole of being”)⁴⁹ on which it depends, while the world does not similarly depend on consciousness.⁵⁰

In this sense, Sartre can be conceived as bearing either an anti-idealist and externalist position on consciousness⁵¹ and a realist position on the world⁵² and is therefore against any attempt to multiply substances or to add intermediary or mediating entities between the thing-in-itself and our experience, such as sensations/sense-data, mental images, etc.⁵³

[...] [T]he image cannot in any way be reconciled with the necessities of synthesis if it remains an inert psychic content. It can only enter into the stream of consciousness if it is itself a synthesis and not an element. There are no and there couldn't be any images in consciousness. But the image is a certain type of consciousness. The image is an act and not a thing. The image is consciousness of something.⁵⁴

Sartre here is arguing against what he defines as the "illusion of immanence," or the attribution of spatial qualities to consciousness as a spatial container of mental states, representations, ideas, psychic objects in general,⁵⁵ we cannot find anything in the brain and we do not re-present anything in our mind, rather consciousness is the disclosing activity of what we find in the surrounding environment.⁵⁶ Moreover, he was critical of the idea that the brain contained images and perceptions, like an empirical version of the illusion of immanence.⁵⁷ This error can be also attributed to all the current cognitive, representational and computational attitudes that aim to find out "where" consciousness is inside the brain. The anti-representationalism and anti-internalism sustained by the enactivists is quite similar to Sartre's critiques of the psychology of his time.

According to authors as Noë and O'Regan (sensorimotor approach), or Hutto and Myin (radical enactive approach), there are no contents, no sense-data nor inner states in the head of the experiencing subject. For Noë and O'Regan and others perceiving is navigating and acting immersed into the environment, and this interaction is possible without the need of internal representation since the external movements as such – generated by the practical and dispositional knowledge of the subject – manipulate the environmental information (for example, sensitivity as movements correlated to external changes).

We ourselves are distributed, dynamically spread-out, world involving beings. We are not world representors. We have no need for that idea. To put the point in a provocative way, we are, in Merleau-Ponty's memorable phrase, 'empty heads turned toward the world.' And as a result of this, our worlds are not confined to what is inside us, memorized, represented. [...] When I look out the window, it doesn't seem to me as if all the environmental detail is represented in my consciousness; [...] [w]hat I see is never the content of a mental snapshot; the world does not seem to be reproduced inside me. Rather – and this is the key – the world seems available to me.⁵⁸

In particular, the body – not just the brain – processes information and plays a representational role in a sensory-motor way, so that mental representations are not to be considered as vivid and detailed images in the head, but as an action-oriented and body-skill-relative way of interacting.⁵⁹ Enactivists like Hutto and Myin, as the name says, are even more radical concerning this point; in addition to criticizing the still too representational, mediating and contentful nature of the sensorimotor knowledge, they also reject the idea that basic mentality it is inherently contentful.⁶⁰ According to radical enactivism, representations of any kind indeed are not required to explain basic mentality, rather these alleged mental objects are usually invoked to explain the experience, but then they are in turn left unexplained.⁶¹

[T]he representational description of the system does not add much to our understanding [...] the representational gloss does not predict anything about the system's behavior that could not be predicted by dynamical explanation alone. [...] [I]n terms of the physics of the situation [game of cricket], the ball, the outfielder, and the intervening medium are just one connected thing. In effective tracking, that is, the outfielder, the ball, and the light reflected from the ball form a single coupled system. No explanatory purchase is gained by invoking representation here: in effective tracking, any internal parts of the agent that one might call mental representations are causally coupled with their targets."⁶²

While the underlying idea is the same – the rejection of experience as the production of contentful representations or “psychic objects” – Sartre and enactivism develop this point in different ways. Sartre sustains that conceptual and content-involving representations are possible and sometimes inevitable for our way of thinking, but they are products of “impure reflection” (*réflexion impure*), therefore they do not correspond to a true phenomenological and ontological description of how experience takes place, but are the result of the hypostatization of conscious states.⁶³ It seems that even radical enactivism admits that some non-basic kinds of cognition, for example, those associated with or dependent upon society and the mastery of language, are necessarily content-involving.⁶⁴

Naturalization

This last point allows me to open here a brief parenthesis about phenomenal experience and naturalization. Radical enactivism aims at a complete account of consciousness and cognition in natural terms, through a non-reductive teleosemantic interpretation of intentionality.

RECCers [Radical Enactivists about Cognition] are naturalists, albeit of a relaxed sort. They hold that it is possible, in principle, to explain the origins of content-involving cognition in a scientifically respectable, gapless way. RECCers aim to do so by making special reference to the important role played by sociocultural scaffolding. [...] REC retains the idea from teleosemantics that intentional directedness has a normative dimension such that it does not reduce to mere behavior or dispositions. [...] The natural attunements between organisms and their environments in the past not only structure the profile of an organism's current tendencies for response, they normatively fix what is intentionally targeted, in complicated ways across multiple spatial and temporal scales.⁶⁵

In this regard, Sartre's position focuses more on the phenomenological and existential dimension of corporeality and its relationship with the world, which is not taken into consideration by the biological and physical relationships between organism and environment proposed by radical enactivism (and also by the sensorimotor and autopoietic approaches).

Although the Sartrean account of bodily consciousness has nothing to do with any naturalized approach, this does not mean that Sartre proposes a dualism between the physical level (*le corps-vu*) and the experiential level (*le corps-existé*) of the body. As seen previously, corporeality and consciousness are not two metaphysical entities, however, they represent two different and irreducible phenomenological ways of expressing and living the same phenomenon. Perhaps, this might be a point in common with what is argued in an article by Kirchhoff and Hutto on radical enactivism concerning the hard problem of consciousness. In this regard, they argue that problems like the mind-body problem or the hard problem of consciousness derive from unsustainable metaphysical premises, insisting that two irreducible types of description do not necessarily imply two metaphysically distinct entities.⁶⁶ Despite this, since they claim that "phenomenal experience is just dynamic activity grounded in agent-environment interactions," they do not take into account any phenomenological analysis of bodily experience, like those developed by Sartre, risking to analyse merely the body-for-others.

In this regard, Sartre's analysis of the three ontological dimensions of the body highlights the limits of a reductive naturalistic approach. Sartre is in line with the classical Husserlian distinction between lived body (*Leib*) and body-object (*Körper*), but he does not only criticize those who conceive the body as a mere object of physical description, rather he argues for a triple account of corporeality. The body is not only the somatic structure of our anatomical parts (1), the body-for-others (*le corps-vu*), but the orientation and condition of

possibility of our being-in-the-world (2), the body as being-for-itself (*le corps-existé*). Additionally, this embodied-being-in-the-world (see section 3) is not constituted by a mere agent-environment opposition, rather is constantly confronted with other agents, hence intersubjectivity; in other words, our bodies – ourselves – are recognized as being manifest and evident to the others, as the object of their experience (3), or what Sartre calls “the third ontological dimension of the body” (*la troisième dimension ontologique du corps*)⁶⁷, the body-I-recognized-as-object-for-others. These three dimensions of corporeality are distinct and irreducible to each other, but they intertwine and alternate each other in our experience of the physical and social world. In particular, the third dimension of the body can be particularly useful for enactivist account of bodily intersubjectivity,⁶⁸ according to which interpersonal interactions influence or even structure the constitution of our self in the world; in this regard, the analysis of the objectifying power of the “look” of the other described by Sartre highlights how the relationships among embodied selves are not limited to the physical domain but have an existential meaning.⁶⁹

Organism-environment Interaction and Sense-making Cognition

As seen, according to Sartre’s ontological phenomenology, there are not two original and independent poles, the world and consciousness, which become connected in a second step; rather our existence is situated and nested from the start within a meaningful world that, however, preserves and develops its meanings through the sense-disclosing interaction of consciousness. Generally speaking, the intrinsic union between environment and organism sustained by all the enactivist positions approximates the Sartrean conception. The subject, according to Sartre has not a vantage point from outside the world, and even bodily consciousness and cognition are not seen merely as an occasional extension of subjectivity beyond the head or the skin, as the Extended Mind Theory sustains, rather consciousness is from the beginning an act of interaction with tools which are in-the-midst-of-the-world. Notably, in *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotion* (1939), Sartre exposes an instance of mereological fallacy *ante litteram*, thus well before it became a critical tool in the philosophy of neuroscience.⁷⁰

Simply because the head of a dog practically isolated from its body still gives signs of emotion, I cannot see that we have the right to conclude that the dog is feeling a complete emotion. Besides, even supposing that the existence of a corticothalamic sensitivity were established, it would still be necessary to ask the previous question: can a physiological disturbance, whatever it may be, render an account of the organized character of an emotion?⁷¹

Given the rejection of the brain as the “seat” of consciousness, and being the act of consciousness a disclosing activity of the world to the body of the subject, one could hypothesize a resemblance between Sartre’s account and the “Equal partner principle” defined by radical enactivism, according to which contributions of the brain does not carry greater explanatory weight nor are prioritized over those of body and the environment.⁷²

Concerning the brain-body-environment relationship, the intrinsic union between environment and organism sustained by all the enactivist positions, as explained above, approximates the Sartrean conception; however, it may be useful to focus on the kind of interactions involved. For Sartre every conscious act towards the world is constituted neither by the passive reception of external stimuli nor only by physical interactions, but also by an act of revealing meanings within an organised world; for example, in my daily experience nails and hammers are related from the start, because my consciousness is not a pure and contemplative act of knowledge of colours, shapes, textures etc. nor a mere sensorimotor kind of knowledge, but it generates meaningful linkages and references among things, contexts, my and other’s body and their functions in the world.

Objects are revealed to us at the heart of a complex of instrumentality in which they occupy a determined place. This place is not defined by pure spatial co-ordinates but in relation to axes of practical reference. “The glass is on the coffee table;” this means that we must be careful not to upset the glass if we move the table. [...] In this sense perception is in no way to be distinguished from the practical organization of existents into a world. [...] But these references could not be grasped by a purely contemplative consciousness. For such a consciousness the hammer would not refer to the nails but would be alongside them; furthermore the expression “alongside” loses all meaning if it does not outline a path which goes from the hammer to the nail and which must be cleared. The space which is originally revealed to me is hodological space; it is furrowed with paths and highways; it is instrumental and it is the location of tools.⁷³

In this sense, the consciousness-world relation sustained by Sartre is not merely spatial and temporal, but also involves contextual meanings and affections, therefore it is more full-bodied and complex compared to the biological and physical interpretation of the organism-environment coupling offered by sensorimotor and radical enactivisms.

Notably, we may find some similarities with the idea of sense-making cognition as proposed by the autopoietic enactive approach, but I would see this only as a weak suggestion. According to Sartre,

The body is the totality of meaningful relations to the world. In this sense it is defined also by reference to the air which it breathes, to the water which it drinks, to the food which it eats. The body in fact could not appear without sustaining meaningful relations with the totality of what is. Like action, life is a transcended transcendence and a meaning. There is no difference in nature between action and life conceived as a totality. Life represents the ensemble of meanings which are transcended toward objects which are not posited as thises on the ground of the world.⁷⁴

Similarly, the concept of sense-making claimed by autopoietic enactivism refers to biological interactions between self-organizing living systems and the environment (at different levels: unicellular, animal, collective, socio-technical)⁷⁵, where the world is always and already meaningful in the “eyes” of the organism.

“Sensemaking” describes behavior or conduct in relation to norms of interaction that the system itself brings forth on the basis of its adaptive autonomy. An adaptive autonomous system produces and sustains its own identity in precarious conditions, registered as better or worse, and thereby establishes a perspective from which interactions with the world acquire a normative status.⁷⁶

However, Sartre’s position is more specific and meant a pragmatic relationship between human experience and the environment as “human reality,” that is, a world as constituted by meanings made for and by humans.⁷⁷ Indeed, an exhaustive account of experience cannot lack an existential analysis of human consciousness as a process of pragmatic sense-making that deals not only with a world of tools and environmental interactions but also with our feeling “something it is like to be-in-the-world,” i.e. to exist as a subject within a human and intersubjective world of given meanings.

More specifically, enactivism – autopoietic enactivism in particular – focuses on the dynamics between environment and organism in general, namely, the necessary biological interactions which are common to all living beings with any degree of cognition (sometimes including plants). In this ecological approach to cognition, the self-reflexive and existential aspect of human subjectivity is missing. This human specificity does not necessarily imply a return to an anthropocentric approach to the study of the mind and cognition (in fact I believe this was not even Sartre’s intention or interest) but requires the development of an integrated approach between enactivism and

phenomenology. For example, just as Sartre's phenomenological investigation of the consciousness-world relationship could be supported by the biodynamic interpretation of contemporary enactivism, in the same way, the enactivist organism-environment coupling could be enriched by a more specific investigation of the interaction between the organism "human being" and the environment "world," according to the Sartrean approach. In this regard, the human consciousness does not simply emerge from the system of dynamic interactions between organism and environment, rather is (also) the subjective stance through which there is something it is like to be involved with this world, that is, being "in-the-world" and not merely "in-the-midst-of-the-world" as in case of objects. So, the environment considered as the background of biological interactions should be differentiated from the more specific human world, which determines the existential conditions of human consciousness and, at the same time, is disclosed by human consciousness as a structure of possibilities and meanings that go beyond the purely biological and physical domains.⁷⁸

Missing Subjectivity

So far, I presented the affinity (yet not total compatibility) between Sartre's phenomenological approach and the varieties of contemporary enactivism. As shown above, there are also many differences, particularly in how the same topics – representations, action-perception, etc. – are approached, methodologically and ontologically speaking. However, I think that especially regarding the concept of subjectivity Sartre's phenomenology of consciousness shows signs of incompatibility with the enactivist account. From an enactivist perspective, we can pursue a complete account of consciousness and cognition without involving any feature related to subjectivity. As I explained above, perception is intrinsically dependent on the actions we perform within the environment, while the subject-agent is the product of these interactions. Moreover, in its effort to clean consciousness out of all the mental properties, representations, etc. and to give an ecological, biodynamic account of the organism-environment coupling, enactivism seems to throw out the baby – subjectivity – with the bathwater.⁷⁹

In particular, the enactive version of the experience defended by Hutto and Ilundain-Agurruza presents an even more radical interpretation of minimal awareness, as a selfless and pre-cognitive activity where every experiential act is lived as "mine" only through subsequent discursive, reflexive processes of self-narration.⁸⁰ Hutto and Ilundain-Agurruza specify in a note that "Sartre argued, contra classical phenomenology and in alignment with our stance, that the subject is not constitutive of experience per se but is rather constituted like other objects in experience."⁸¹ This is partially true since Sartre's pre-reflective consciousness – consciousness (of

consciousness – has nothing to do with the constant and manifested presence of a self within the experience. As explained by Sartre in the *Transcendence of the Ego*, when I am running towards the departing tram I am not accessing my consciousness in a way like “I am running towards the tram,” rather there is only consciousness of the tram that must be reached, and I may not even remember which obstacles I avoided and whether there were other people along the sidewalk.⁸² Sartre says that the “transcendental field of this unreflected consciousness” is “impersonal, or, if you prefer, ‘prepersonal’, it is without an I’;⁸³ the things of the world made the person, i.e. are the conditions for the emergence of an “I,” and not vice versa. The “I” is a product of the reflection and therefore it counts as another transcendent object of consciousness – useful, necessary, etc. but still a consequence of the conscious act, not the foundation of it.

Nevertheless, I would not attribute to Sartre the idea that the basic experience is completely devoid of any subjectivity. It is not true that the only possible alternative to support the validity of the concept of subjectivity is to hypostatize a cognitive, narrative self or an I-subject detached from the body and the world. The fact that our consciousness can possess degrees of anonymity, spontaneity and impersonality does not mean that there is no room for self-consciousness, first-person givenness or for-me-ness. Despite the absence of a robust “I-subject,” i.e. the Ego as pivot and collector of all lived experiences, all consciousnesses are structured by a presence to itself, i.e. selfhood or “selfness” in the words of Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*.⁸⁴ This condition of self-consciousness (what Sartre defines as “*conscience de soi*,” the pre-reflective cogito) is not necessarily and automatically manifested through every single moment of our daily life, nor, on the other hand, is it a cognitive reflection upon our states of consciousness, rather it is the non-intentional and non-objectifying condition for the subsequent high-order self-consciousness (what instead Sartre defines as “*connaissance de soi*,” the Cartesian cogito).⁸⁵ Without this precondition – necessarily non-sufficient – involved in any world-immersed experience, we would not be able to understand how we can reflect upon our conscious state at any moment.

Moreover, for Sartre subjective phenomenal features are not properties of our mind – and this is consistent with enactivism – rather features of the things in the way they are manifested to us.

So all at once hatred, love, fear, sympathy – all those famous “subjective” reactions that were floating in the malodorous brine of the mind – are pulled out. They are simply ways of discovering the world. Things are what abruptly unveil themselves to us as hateful, sympathetic, horrible, lovable.⁸⁶

Sartre strives to develop an account of consciousness that can consider the transphenomenality of being, i.e. the fact that the objects of consciousness are always outside and transcendent with all their qualitative characteristics,

without falling into the materialistic and reductive interpretation of “being conscious of something” as mere physical or biological interactions. In this sense, Sartre aims to strike a balance between the transcendent being of the world and the intake of consciousness (self-awareness and phenomenality) so that it is possible to avoid both idealism and mechanistic materialism. Sartre goes to the roots of the question concerning subjectivity and argues that existence (the for-itself, consciousness) is essentially an activity of negation, i.e. nothingness in the sense of the surpassing activity (*dépassement*) through the body, towards and within the world that permits the determination of itself as self-transcendence.⁸⁷ In other words, consciousness as disclosing activity surpasses itself towards the objects of the world (see anti-internalism), so that it encounters being as something which is not itself, that is, which is not consciousness: “It is impossible to construct the notion of an object if we do not have originally a negative relation designating the object as that which is not consciousness.”⁸⁸ Instead of being a Cartesian I-subject that determines the existence of external objects or a pure biodynamic interaction between an organism and the environment, this negative relation permits, at the same time, the determination of the object as part of an infinite series of appearances and the recognition of myself as the subject to which this series is manifested:

The reality of that cup is that it is there and that it is not me. We shall interpret this by saying that the series of its appearances is bound by a principle which does not depend on my whim. But the appearance, reduced to itself and without reference to the series of which it is a part, could be only an intuitive and subjective plenitude, the manner in which the subject is affected. If the phenomenon is to reveal itself as transcendent, it is necessary that the subject himself transcend the appearance toward the total series of which it is a member.⁸⁹

This distinction between subjectivity and what is not subjectivity is what is missing in sensorimotor and radical enactivisms, as the analysis of the sensorimotor skills and the organism-environment coupling is devoid of any reference to this dynamic. From the autopoietic enactivist perspective, one might interpret the organism’s autopoietic system in interaction with the environment and its sense-making process as the biodynamic structure from which subjectivity emerges; however, this hypothesis might be a little far-fetched. Surely, what enactivism in general misses is the investigation of subjectivity as the pre-reflective bodily self-awareness, which is to say the pre-cognitive process that both is self-transcendence through the body towards the world and self-positing as something – a body – different from the transcended objects of the world.⁹⁰

Conclusion

Sartre's account of consciousness is grounded on a complex and wide-ranging analysis of the body, recently revisited and re-evaluated by many scholars. According to Sartre, our experience is always embodied, but the body *per se* is not the real centre of his analysis, rather it is the body as intrinsically related to the external context, that is, the body passed by silence and surpassed towards the world. We have seen how this can be interpreted also through the lenses of enactivism. Some key points of enactivism can be identified within the Sartrean account of consciousness (anti-representationalism, externalism, action-perception, organism-environment interaction), however the way these concepts are developed is different. Notably, Sartre mainly focuses on the phenomenological-existential dimension of being embodied and enacted in the world, whereas enactivism develops the physical-biological structures of the dynamic interaction between organism and environment. Nonetheless, this methodological – but also ontological – difference does not necessarily imply the rejection of a potential integrative approach with the Sartrean phenomenology. Rather, it can indicate to current enactivism some potential ways of complementing the investigation of consciousness and cognition. In particular, I suggest that Sartre may inspire enactivism to pay greater attention to the concept of subjectivity as pre-reflective, self-aware, embodied transcendence towards the world, as well as to support the naturalized description of the organism-environment coupling with a phenomenological investigation of the specifically human meaning correlated with these biodynamic interactions. Lastly, enactivism underestimates the plurality of perspectives towards corporeality. Sensorimotor, autopoietic and radical enactivisms get the point by highlighting the importance of the body-environment relationship for an adequate account of consciousness and cognition. However, their contribution is limited to the dimension that Sartre defines as the body-for others, namely, the body structured by physical properties described by a third-person perspective. This perspective could be completed or at least enriched by the two other existential conditions of the body elaborated by Sartre, namely, the body-for-itself and the third ontological dimension of the body.

¹ Albert Newen, Leon De Bruin, and Shaun Gallagher, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

² Shaun Gallagher, “Decentering the Brain: Embodied Cognition and the Critique of Neurocentrism and Narrow-Minded Philosophy of Mind,” *Constructivist Foundations* 14 (2018).

³ Ezequiel Di Paolo and Evan Thompson, “The Enactive Approach,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition*, ed. Lawrence A. Shapiro (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁴ Georg Theiner, “The Extended Mind,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, ed. Brian Turner (Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).

⁵ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).

⁶ Gina Zavota, “Expanding the Extended Mind: Merleau-Ponty’s Late Ontology as Radical Enactive Cognition,” *Essays in Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2016): 94-124; Shaun Gallagher, “The Past, Present and Future of Time-Consciousness: From Husserl to Varela and Beyond,” *Constructivist Foundations* 13, no. 1 (2017): 91-97; Dave Ward, David Silverman, and Mario Villalobos, “Introduction: The Varieties of Enactivism,” *Topoi* 36, no. 3 (2017): 365-75.

⁷ Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

⁸ Michael Beaton, “Sensorimotor Direct Realism: How We Enact Our World,” *Constructivist Foundations* 11, no. 2 (2016): 265-76.

⁹ Erik Myin and Victor Loughlin, “Sensorimotor and Enactive Approaches to Consciousness,” in *The Routledge Handbook Of Consciousness*, ed. Rocco J. Gennaro (London: Routledge, 2018); Dave Ward, David Silverman, and Mario Villalobos, “Introduction: The Varieties of Enactivism,” *Topoi* 36, no. 3 (2017): 365-75.

¹⁰ O’Regan and Noë, “A Sensorimotor Account of Vision and Visual Consciousness”; Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Andreas K. Engel et al., “Where’s the Action? The Pragmatic Turn in Cognitive Science,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 17, n° 5 (2013): 202-209.

¹¹ “Consciousness is not something that happens inside us. It is something we do or make. Better: it is something we achieve. Consciousness is more like dancing than it is like digestion. [...]The phenomenon of consciousness, like that of life itself, is a world-involving dynamic process. We are already at home in the environment. We are out of our heads. [...] You can no more explain mind in terms of the cell than you can explain dance in terms of the muscle”; Alva Noë, “Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness,” *Minds and Machines* 20, n° 1 (2009): xii, xiii, 48.

- ¹² Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
- ¹³ Lawrence A. Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- ¹⁴ Di Paolo and Thompson, "The Enactive Approach"; Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Belknap Press, 2007); Francisco J. Varela, "Patterns of Life: Intertwining Identity and Cognition," *Brain and Cognition* 34, n° 1 (1997): 72-87.
- ¹⁵ Ezequiel A. Di Paolo, "The Enactive Conception of Life," in *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition*, 71-94.
- ¹⁶ Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*.
- ¹⁷ Daniel D. Hutto and Erik Myin, *Evolving Enactivism: Basic Minds Meet Content*, *Evolving Enactivism: Basic Minds Meet Content* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017); Daniel D. Hutto and Erik Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds Without Content* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); Daniel D. Hutto, "REC: Revolution Effected by Clarification," *Topoi* 36, n° 3 (2017).
- ¹⁸ Matthew Bower and Shaun Gallagher, "Bodily Affects as Prenoteic Elements in Enactive Perception," *Phenomenology and Mind* 4 (2016): 78-93.
- ¹⁹ Dermot Moran, "Revisiting Sartre's Ontology of Embodiment in Being and Nothingness," in *Ontological Landscapes: Recent Thought on Conceptual Interfaces Between Science and Philosophy*, ed. V. Petrov (Frankfurt: Ontos, 2011).
- ²⁰ Dorothée Legrand, "Myself with No Body? Body, Bodily-Consciousness and Self-Consciousness," in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Daniel Schmicking and Shaun Gallagher (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 180-200.
- ²¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Northwestern University Press, 1964); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, ed. Donald A. Landes, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2013).
- ²² Katherine J. Morris, "Introduction: Sartre on the Body," in *Sartre on the Body*, ed. Katherine J. Morris (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 3-4. Joseph S. Catalano, "The Body and the Book: Reading Being and Nothingness," in *Sartre on the Body*, ed. Katherine J. Morris (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 32.
- ²³ Moran, "Revisiting Sartre's Ontology of Embodiment in Being and Nothingness." Katherine J. Morris, *Sartre on the Body* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009); Jean-Pierre Boulé and Benedict O'Donohoe, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Mind and Body, Word and Deed* (Cambridge Scholars, 2011); Kathleen Wider, *The Bodily Nature of Consciousness: Sartre and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind* (Cornell University Press, 1997); Kathleen Wider, "Sartre, Enactivism, and the Bodily Nature of Pre-Reflective Consciousness," in *Pre-Reflective Consciousness: Sartre and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*, eds. Sofia Miguens, Gerhard Preyer, and Clara Bravo Morando

(London: Routledge, 2016); Veronica Campos, “Did Someone Slip the Enactivist’s (Embodied) Mind? Convergences between Jean-Paul Sartre and Alva Noë,” (2017) https://www.academia.edu/33027650/DID_SOMEONE_SLIP_THE_ENACTIVISTS_EMBO_DIED_MIND_Convergences_between_Jean-Paul_Sartre_and_Alva_Noë (accessed 08 February 2020).

²⁴ Moran, “Revisiting Sartre’s Ontology of Embodiment in Being and Nothingness,” 290.

²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2012); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, (London: Routledge, 2015); Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2004).

²⁶ Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*; Sartre, *The Imagination*.

²⁷ In a late interview (1975) he stated that the next step in the studies of consciousness could be an account of the relation between consciousness and the brain; Jean-Paul Sartre, “An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre: Interview by M. Rybalka, O. Pucciani, and S. Gruenheck (Paris, May 12 and 19, 1975),” in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. P.A. Schilpp (Chicago and LaSalle: Open Court, 1981), 40.

²⁸ Gary Cox, *Sartre: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Guides for the Perplexed (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 54.

²⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, ed. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 309.

³⁰ “Actually if after grasping ‘my’ consciousness in its absolute interiority and by a series of reflective acts, I then seek to unite it with a certain living object composed of a nervous system, a brain, glands, digestive, respiratory, and circulatory organs whose very matter is capable of being analyzed chemically into atoms of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, etc., then I am going to encounter insurmountable difficulties. But these difficulties all stem from the fact that I try to unite my consciousness not with my body but with the body of others. In fact the body which I have just described is not my body such as it is for me.” Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 303.

³¹ “Consciousness of the body is comparable to the consciousness of a sign. The sign moreover is on the side of the body; it is one of the essential structures of the body. Now the consciousness of a sign exists, for otherwise we should not be able to understand its meaning. But the sign is that which is surpassed toward meaning, that which is neglected for the sake of the meaning, that which is never apprehended for

itself, that beyond which the look is perpetually directed”; Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 330.

³² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 309.

³³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 330.

³⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 328.

³⁵ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 306, modified.

³⁶ “For human reality, to be is to-be-there; that is, ‘there in that chair,’ ‘there at that table,’ ‘there at the top of that mountain, with these dimensions, this orientation, etc.’ It is an ontological necessity” Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 308.

³⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 323.

³⁸ Wider, “Sartre, Enactivism, and the Bodily Nature of Pre-Reflective Consciousness.”

³⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 322.

⁴⁰ Kathleen Wider, “Sartre, Enactivism, and the Bodily Nature of Pre-Reflective Consciousness.”

⁴¹ Noë, *Action in Perception*, 100, 164.

⁴² “To experience an object as off the left is to experience it as standing in a relation to one which one grasps as constituted by patterns of sensorimotor dependence. To experience it as on the left is to experience it as necessitating or admitting (indeed, in some sense, as affording) various possibilities of sense-affecting movements. [...]The experience of a thing’s movements depends on your understanding of the sorts of sensorimotor contingencies mediating your relation to the thing.”; Noë, *Action in Perception*, 87-88.

⁴³ Wider, “Sartre, Enactivism, and the Bodily Nature of Pre-Reflective Consciousness,” 393.

⁴⁴ Tibor Solymosi, “Neuropragmatism, Old and New,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 10 (2011): 360.

⁴⁵ Mark Rowlands, “Sartre, Consciousness, and Intentionality,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 12, no. 3 (2013): 521-36.

⁴⁶ Someone might argue that pre-reflective non-positional consciousness does not involve intentionality as being conscious of something; however, as we have seen in the second chapter, “Sartre does not think of non-positional consciousness as a separate form of conscious act but, rather, as something that is necessarily built into any positional (i.e. intentional) conscious act.” Rowlands, “Sartre, Consciousness, and Intentionality,” 530n.

⁴⁷ Rowlands, “Sartre, Consciousness, and Intentionality”; Mark Rowlands, “Enactivism, Intentionality, and Content,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2013), 303-16; Mark Rowlands, “Sartre on Pre-Reflective Consciousness: The

Adverbial Interpretation,” in *Pre-Reflective Consciousness: Sartre and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*, eds. Sofia Miguens, Gerhard Preyer, and Clara Bravo Morando (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016).

⁴⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, lxi; see also Rowlands, “Sartre, Consciousness, and Intentionality,” 528: “In Sartre’s terminology: being for-itself requires and presupposes being-in-itself. Being for-itself has no content. We might think of it as a hole in being-in-itself. A hole cannot exist without its edges, but these edges are not part of the hole. [...] For this reason, Sartre characterizes his position as a ‘radical reversal of idealism’.”

⁴⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 79.

⁵⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 506.

⁵¹ Mark Rowlands, *Externalism: Putting Mind and World Back Together Again* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁵² John Duncan, “Sartre and Realism-All-the-Way-Down,” *Sartre Studies International* 11, no. 1-2 (2007); Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre: An Analytical Introduction to Early Sartrean Themes* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁵³ “Sensation, a hybrid notion between the subjective and the objective, conceived from the standpoint of the object and applied subsequently to the subject, a bastard existence concerning which we cannot say whether it exists in fact or in theory—sensation is a pure daydream of the psychologist. It must be deliberately rejected by any serious theory concerning the relations between consciousness and the world.” Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 315.

⁵⁴ Sartre, *The Imagination*, 144.

⁵⁵ “We depicted consciousness as a place peopled with small imitations and these imitations were the images. Without any doubt, the origin of this illusion must be sought in our habit of thinking in space and in terms of space. I will call it: the illusion of immanence”; Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, 5.

⁵⁶ “To be is to fly out into the world, to spring from the nothingness of the world and of consciousness in order suddenly to burst out as consciousness-in-the-world. When consciousness tries to recoup itself, to coincide with itself once and for all, closeted off all warm and cozy, it destroys itself. This necessity for consciousness to exist as consciousness of something other than itself is what Husserl calls ‘intentionality’.” Jean-Paul Sartre, “Une Idée Fondamentale de La Phénoménologie de Husserl: L’intentionnalité,” *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 304 (1939): 131.

⁵⁷ “The image memory is something other and more than a simple cerebral reviviscence. The brain could not have as a function the storing of images. Perception is a direct contact with the thing. [...] [O]ne speaks to us about images and ideas ‘in the brain’. And we do not know what that means.” Sartre, *The Imagination*, 72, 103.

⁵⁸ Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, 82, 140.

⁵⁹ Kevin O’Regan, *Why Red Doesn’t Sound Like A Bell: Understanding the Feel of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Noë, *Out of Our Heads*; O’Regan and Noë, “A Sensorimotor Account of Vision and Visual Consciousness”; Erik Myin and Kevin O’Regan, “Situated Perception and Sensation in Vision and Other Modalities: A Sensorimotor Approach,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition*, eds. Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 185-200.

⁶⁰ Hutto and Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds Without Content*, 23-32.

⁶¹ Myin and Loughlin, “Sensorimotor and Enactive Approaches to Consciousness.”

⁶² Chemero, *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*, 77, 114.

⁶³ In this regard, Eshleman listed six possible errors made by cognition concerning our experience, some of them explicitly named by Sartre, others indirectly derived from many of his works. Matthew C. Eshleman, “A Sketch of Sartre’s Error Theory of Introspection,” in *Pre-Reflective Consciousness: Sartre and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*, eds. Sofia Miguens, Gerhard Preyer, and Clara Brava Morando (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁴ Hutto and Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds Without Content*.

⁶⁵ Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism: Basic Minds Meet Content*, 116, 122.

⁶⁶ “The first thing to recognize is that the hard problem is not just hard: it is impossible. Once the assumptions that give it life are in play, the problem cannot be put to rest. [...] The need for and possibility of such an explanation - non-reductive or otherwise - is obviated if we conceive of the phenomenal and the physical as being one and the same - as identical. This is to deny, resolutely, that ‘the phenomenal’ and ‘the physical’ denote two distinct kinds of relata that might be conceivably integrated. [...] A first step in this direction is to note that the mere fact that phenomenal descriptions cannot be inferred or induced from physical descriptions does not imply that we are dealing with two separate and distinct metaphysical entities. [...] Phenomenal experience, on an REC view, just is a kind of organismic activity.” Michael David Kirchhoff and Daniel D. Hutto, “Never Mind the Gap: Neurophenomenology, Radical Enactivism, and the Hard Problem of Consciousness,” *Constructivist Foundations* 11, no. 2 (2016): 308.

⁶⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 351.

⁶⁸ Miriam Kyselo, "The body social: an enactive approach to the self," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, (2014): 986.

⁶⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 252-302.

⁷⁰ Max R. Bennett and Peter M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

⁷¹ Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, 34.

⁷² Hutto and Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds Without Content*; Hutto and Myin, *Evolving Enactivism: Basic Minds Meet Content*.

⁷³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 321-22.

⁷⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 345.

⁷⁵ Xabier E. Barandiaran, "Autonomy and Enactivism: Towards a Theory of Sensorimotor Autonomous Agency," *Topoi* 36, no. 3 (2017): 409-30; Di Paolo, "The Enactive Conception of Life"; Miriam Kyselo, "The Body Social: An Enactive Approach to the Self," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2014.

⁷⁶ Di Paolo and Thompson, "The Enactive Approach," 73.

⁷⁷ "The world is a synthetic complex of instrumental realities inasmuch as they point one to another in ever widening circles, and inasmuch as man makes himself known in terms of this complex which he is. This means both that 'human reality' springs forth invested with being and 'finds itself' (*sich befinden*) in being - and also that human reality causes being, which surrounds it, to be disposed around human reality in the form of the world" Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 17.

⁷⁸ "We shall use the expression *Circuit of selfness* (*Circuit de ipséité*) for the relation of the for-itself with the possible which it is, and 'world' for the totality of being in so far as it is traversed by the circuit of selfness. [...] Without the world there is no selfness, no person; without selfness, without the person, there is no world. But the world's belonging to the person is never posited on the level of the pre-reflective cogito. It would be absurd to say that the world as it is known is known as mine. Yet this quality of 'my-ness' in the world is a fugitive structure, always present, a structure which I *live*. The world (is) mine because it is haunted by possibles, and the consciousness of each of these is a possible self-consciousness which I *am*; it is these possibles as such which give the world its unity and its meaning as the world." Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 102, 104.

⁷⁹ Of course, there are exceptions: Mog Stapleton and Tom Froese, "The Enactive Philosophy of Embodiment: From Biological Foundations of Agency to the Phenomenology of Subjectivity," in *Biology and Subjectivity: Philosophical Contributions to Non-reductive Neuroscience*, eds. García-Valdecasas, Murillo,

Barrett (Springer, 2016), 113-130. John Jenkinson, "Enactive subjectivity as flesh," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 16 (2017): 931-951.

⁸⁰ Daniel D. Hutto, Jesus Ilundáin-Agurruza, "Selfless Activity and Experience: Radicalizing Minimal Self-Awareness," *Topoi* (2018): 1-12.

⁸¹ Hutto and Ilundain-Agurruza, "Selfless Activity and Experience," 5n.

⁸² Steven Crowell, "Sartre's Existentialism and the Nature of Consciousness," in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 203-204.

⁸³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: A Sketch for a Phenomenological Description* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

⁸⁴ "Yet we need not conclude that the for-itself is a pure and simple "impersonal" contemplation. But the Ego is far from being the personalizing pole of a consciousness which without it would remain in the impersonal stage; on the contrary, it is consciousness in its fundamental selfness which under certain conditions allows the appearance of the Ego as the transcendent phenomenon of that selfness" (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 103). "[...] Sartre's crucial move is to distinguish self and ego (Sartre 2003: 263). Although no ego exists on the pre-reflective level, consciousness remains characterized by a basic dimension of selfhood precisely because of its ubiquitous self-consciousness. This is why Sartre could write, 'pre-reflective consciousness is self-consciousness. It is this same notion of self which must be studied, for it defines the very being of consciousness' (Sartre 2003: 100). [...] [P]re-reflective self-consciousness is ineliminably first-personal, that is, characterized by for-me-ness. And that is all that is needed in order to warrant the notion of an experiential self." Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014), 48.

⁸⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi," *Bulletin de La Société Française de Philosophie*, 42 (1948): 49-91.

⁸⁶ Sartre, *Une Idée Fondamentale*, 131.

⁸⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 17, 18.

⁸⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 173.

⁸⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, xlvii.

⁹⁰ "What can properly be called subjectivity is consciousness (of) consciousness. But this consciousness (of being) consciousness must be qualified in some way, and it can be qualified only as revealing intuition or it is nothing" (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, lxi).