BEING AND TIME: SOME ASPECTS OF THE EGO'S INVOLVEMENT IN HIS MENTAL LIFE

The most obvious cases of ego-involvement in conscious life are those which Husserl calls conscious acts or cogitationes. They are the most obvious cases because they are the ones in which the ego explicitly involves himself in some way; they exhibit the character of being engaged in by the ego or having been engaged in by him. This ego-quality or character belongs demonstrably to every conscious process in which the ego engages or lives. In the ego’s conscious life, the life to which his, her, or its acts belong, there also occur mental or intentive processes in which the ego does not or did not engage, and these Husserl calls passive or non-actional processes as contrasted with the active or actional processes characterized by ego-engagement.

The ego does not engage in all the mental processes occurring in his life, but it is only insofar as the ego does engage that we may speak of any particular process as having only one object or a definite set of objects. It is characteristic of acts that they objectivate. This is not simply to say that the ego engages in all those and only those mental processes having definite objects, nor is it to say that the objects of conscious processes in which

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1 This paper is a somewhat enlarged and revised version of that read by the author under the title “The Involvement of the Ego in his Mental Life” in the symposium “The Phenomenology of the Ego” held under the auspices of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy at Evanston, Illinois on October 23, 1969.

2 In the terminology developed by Edmund Husserl in his Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. I. Buch, Allgemeine Einführung in die Phänomenologie (Halle a. d. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1913), § 35. This work is more generally available as Volume III of Husserliana: Edmund Husserl, Gesammelte Werke (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), a much changed and enlarged edition by Walter Biemel, whose “Textkritischer Anhang” nevertheless permits reconstruction of the text of the 1913 edition. Hereafter, this work will be cited simply as Ideen I; the page numbers given will be those of the 1913 edition which are printed in the margins of the Husserliana edition.

3 Ideen I, p. 244.
the ego does not engage are a confused, undifferentiated manifold. Rather, it is only by virtue of ego-engagement that "something" is the object of an intentive process. To the extent that the ego is engaged in a conscious process, the process becomes an act, and there belongs then to the objective sense of this act a "this" which is the object or one of the objects of the act.4

Engaging in a mental process, the ego busies himself with something intended to in that process. Objectivating may also be understood as thematizing.5 More precisely, objectivating is only one specific kind or way of thematizing. But it is the basic way of thematizing in the sense that it is so to speak the sine qua non of thematizings on which all others are founded, without which no other kind of thematization occurs. Like all other "doxic" thematizings, objectivatings always have to do with the object in some modality of being.6 Let us say the ego engages in a perceiving, a seeing perhaps of the flyswatter with which he means to kill a fly: doing so involves his thematically grasping and positing the objective sense of his seeing; it is a "this" and more; it is in fact just the thing he was looking for, namely, the flyswatter. The seeing involved here will, in the normal case, have the quality of a simple believing. This believing is a character of the act of perceiving, i.e., of the noesis, and is what Husserl calls a doxic thetic character or positional character. The object of an act having the thetic character "believing" may be said to have the positional character "something that is." The object of a disbelieving would have the character "something that is not." Believing in and disbelieving in and, indeed, all modalities of believingness are doxic thetic characters of acts, and all acts having such characters will be what we have called objectivatings.

The ego, having engaged in a mental process and thus posited objectivatingly an intentional objective sense belonging to that process, may go on to objectivate the thetic character of the act or noesis. The objective or noematic correlate of this further objectivating would be the believedness of "something that is,"

5 Ideen I, p. 253. For a consideration of the complexity of thematization, see ibid., § 117 and PP., Appendix XXIV.
6 Ideen I, § 103.