

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ETHICS OF HUSSERL

V. C. Thomas

ABSTRACT

Husserl's treatment of phenomenological ethics began with the notion of static phenomenology where he accepted several of Brentano's principles of ethics. Soon, realizing the limitations of such an ethics, he changed his viewpoints and started applying the doctrines of genetic phenomenology to ethics. In both the kinds of ethics, Husserl spoke of categorical imperatives, but they were very different. The major points around which Husserl constructed genetic phenomenological ethics were subjective and intersubjective values, personal ought as absolute, ought as a vocation, tragic sacrifice in the choice of absolute values, religious ethos and divine milieu in the context of choosing a value, integrative relation among individuals, community and tradition, higher order personalities, the movement from life world to home world, the different kinds of communities, and the like. The genetic phenomenological ethics culminated in the notion of universal ethical love where Husserl spoke of rational faith in God. The paper concludes by saying that God who appears in the genetic phenomenological ethics confines his presence exclusively to the domain of genetic phenomenological ethics and does not spread it to the rest of genetic phenomenology, an insight that Husserl got, may be, from Kant's ethics.

INTRODUCTION: STATIC AND GENETIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Static phenomenology is Husserl's philosophical method of working out the phenomenology of *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901) and *Ideas I* (1913). It arises mainly on account of Husserl's rejection of psychologism, an error he committed in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic*. He realised his mistake so much so that he withheld the publication of second part of that book. He devoted a large portion of volume 1 of *Logical Investigations* to the refutation of psychologism. Static phenomenology is also used for the reputation of scepticism. Scepticism calls into question our ability to know anything at all positively. Static phenomenology is concerned with conscious acts expressed in perception, thinking, feeling, judgements, etc., which means it deals with an investigation into our experiences. Through phenomenological reductions, Husserl achieved a position of absolute givenness in terms of noema. Remember, the 'noema chair' can assume several meanings assigned to it by the noesis. Static analysis deals with pure formal structures.

Static phenomenology is too rigid such that it restricts Husserl's approach to subjectivity, i.e., a transcendental ego. Husserl's problem with static phenomenology is that it disregards the background of the object, i.e., the horizon of the object (noema), ignores the temporal order and negates history. It discards totally intersubjectivity. However, it may be noted that Husserl during that period delivered time-consciousness lectures (1905). Yet, at that time he did not find it necessary to use it in static phenomenology, may be because he was not aware of the full ramifications of it. Moreover, static phenomenology prevented him from looking at social, cultural and ethical dimensions of phenomenology.

Already in *Logical Investigations*, however, Husserl used the expression genesis and genetic phenomenology to indicate the difference between phenomenology and empirical psychology. Even in *Ideas I*, he uses the expression genetic phenomenology. But he became aware of the implications and limitations of it only when he started writing *Ideas II*.

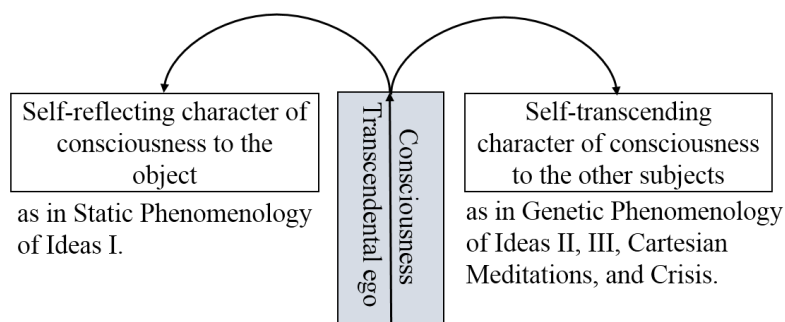
THE ADVANTAGES OF GENETIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Genetic phenomenology has several advantages over static phenomenology. Some of them are: (1) by making a transfer from static to genetic phenomenology, we are not confronted with the notion of constitution in its rigid form and strict structure as in *Ideas I*, but rather we consider the reciprocal relationship between the noesis and the noema, i.e., the so-called subject and the object. But I need to add immediately that Husserl uses the word constitution, not only in the text of *Ideas II*, but even in the Sections One, Two and Three of the title pages. What can be said about this ambiguous use of the word constitution is this. The use of the word constitution in *Ideas II* does not have the rigid structure and unalterable framework which it had in *Ideas I*. To put it figuratively, the word constitution in *Ideas II* is humanized. (2) Genetic phenomenology uncovers the temporal nature of the object of experience, i.e., every noema, that is the object as it appears, has a history and a horizon. Genetic phenomenology provides a detailed elucidation of that history and horizon. (3) The notion of lived body, *Leib*, can be examined only by way of genetic phenomenology, although Husserl uses the term constitution occasionally with respect to *Leib*. However, Husserl is aware of the limitation of his use of constitution with respect to *Leib*. (4) Moreover, in *Crisis of European Sciences*, he points out that we can discuss traditions of human activity that contributes to the problem of the cross-generational structure of meaning, problems of science, etc., only with the help of genetic phenomenology.

In static phenomenology, absolute consciousness, i.e., is subjectivity or transcendental ego, is the foundation of phenomenology. But genetic phenomenology replaces absolute subjectivity with intersubjectivity as the basis of phenomenology. In static phenomenology Husserl assumed that

phenomenological reduction has a negative function to perform, viz., the elimination of conception of existence, i.e., eidetic reduction, and the removal of beliefs. i.e., psychological reduction. He had an understanding of positive value of reduction both in the context of transcendental reduction and reduction by way of ontology of Lifeworld. The positive understanding of reduction developed very strongly in genetic phenomenology such that the transcendental ego can now say that the world is no more mine but 'ours'. The sphere of 'ours' is intersubjective. Husserl also realises that the layers of meaning that object, noema, gets cannot be the work of one single transcendental ego but that meaning arises in an intersubjective context, i.e., a community is required for cross cultural and cross generational meanings. We inherit from others, from the society at large, meanings of our ethical values and moral convictions.

Consciousness is consciousness of something. Husserl uses the expression *zu den Sachen selbst* for it. My close reading of several passages in Husserl compels me to say that Husserl uses the word *Sachen* in two different senses: in the sense of things in static phenomenology and in the sense of the other subjects in genetic phenomenology. This is because consciousness is both self-reflective and self-transcending. In *Ideas I*, i.e., the major text of static phenomenology, Husserl concentrated on the self-reflective character of consciousness towards *things*, the primary sense of *Sachen*. But in the genetic phenomenology of *Ideas II & III*, in *Cartesian Meditations*, in *Crisis of European Sciences* and post-*Crisis* writings, Husserl was also concerned with the self-transcending characteristics of consciousness to *the other* (subjects), i.e., intersubjective character of self-transcending, the second sense in which I understand the sense of *Sachen*. I express my thoughts diagrammatically.



THE NOTION OF THE OTHER

Transcendental ego is present to itself directly and immediately due to its self-awareness while being aware of objects. This direct and immediate presence of oneself to oneself is a privileged presence. But I do not have such a privileged access to the other; I do not have a direct and

immediate presence of the other; the other does not have such an immediate presence to myself. The other, the alter ego, can have only a mediate presence to myself. Mediate presence is co-presence or what is called apperception. Apperception is the perception of the other from the perspective of horizon. The perception of the horizon means that the known leads us to (the perception of) the unknown, the perceived and the known definitely leads us to the discovery of the unknown. We only need to make genuine efforts to discover the unknown. The known is the springboard or the launching pad for us to move towards the unknown. In the context of alter-ego what it means is this. The other is my horizon. I have my body and in and through my body I know that I am a person. Similarly, I encounter the body of the other and in and through this encountering of the others' body, i.e., through the perception of the body of the other, I perceive him as a person. This is what Husserl calls my apperception of him as a person. In other words, what Husserl says is that what I have I cannot deny to the other. The only difference is that I have a direct, immediate and privileged access to my personhood through my body. However, I do have only a mediate access to the personhood of the other, i.e., I arrive at the personhood of the other by encountering his body. In as much as my body is the window to view my personhood, his body is the window to view his personhood. My passive association with the other (in Heidegger's terms it means being-with) enables me to transfer my personhood to the other. In as much as I am a person in relation to my body, the other is a person in relation to his body.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUSSERL'S ETHICAL WRITINGS

Husserl, during his lifetime, did not publish a single word on phenomenological ethics. However, he started writing on ethical issues already in 1897, even before his phenomenological writing started. His very first article on ethics is titled "Ethics and Philosophy of Right". It deals with the refutation of ethical scepticism. In this paper he describes ethics as "a scientific discipline investigating the highest aims of life which help an individual's rational order of life and action in relation to his aims".

Three major periods of Husserl's ethical writings

1. From 1908 to 1914: During this period, Husserl delivered lectures on three major courses in his University on ethics and axiology and wrote a number of manuscripts on phenomenological analysis of axiology, emotional and volitional consciousness.
2. From 1920 to 1925. During this period, Husserl published 3 articles and wrote a few essays on ethics and axiological issues.
3. From 1932 to 1936. He wrote several manuscripts linking ethics and issues in ontology.

Husserl archives in Leuven University published all his writings on ethics in Volume Number 28 of *Husserliana*.

BRENTANO, HUSSERL AND ETHICS BASED ON STATIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Initially, Husserl's ethics is dependent on Brentano and his notion of categorical imperative. The notion of categorical imperative is intended to overcome both ethical relativism and ethical scepticism and yet it accommodates both feelings and desires. Categorical imperative of Brentano, "do the best that is attainable," has a universal structure and the universal validity. Following Brentano's notion of Categorical Imperative, Husserl wants to establish formal laws of values and willing.

Husserl accepts two aspects of Brentano's ethical theory. They are the role of feeling in ethical theory and the function of reasoning in valuing and willing. Husserl is sure that someone can point out that there is an opposition between ethics of feeling and ethics reason. But he goes on to say that this opposition can be overcome for ethics is ultimately founded on acts of feeling and willing. He also goes on to say that the foundation of ethics on feelings and willing does not eliminate objectivity of values and the universal validity of ethical principles.

Husserl in his static phenomenological ethics accepts the categorical imperative of Brentano, viz., "do the best that is attainable", but interprets it differently. Husserl would say now that Brentano's categorical imperative, mentioned above, is not the appropriate object of willing of an individual. It is so universal, like Kant's Categorical Imperative, such that it does not have a reference to a particular context of an ethical individual but rather it refers to the whole of humanity. And, moreover, it does not mention anything about a lesser achievement which are better than failures.

The important discovery of Husserl in this context is that there is an analogous relationship or comparable parallelism between the objectifying acts of thinking and reasoning and the non-objectifying, i.e., subjectivizing, acts of willing and valuing, i.e., emotional and volitional acts. In the case thinking, truth can be articulated and expressed in statements. In the case of values, values are expressed in feelings. Husserl's major contention is that values are given in feelings and volitional acts. Similarly, in as much as perception is not merely the grasping of sensual experience, for it needs understanding and interpretation as well, values also demand understanding and interpretation of volitional acts. In the context of knowledge, we have certainty or doubt, similarly in the context of values we have probability or improbability. If logic is the science of thought, ethics provides laws of willing and valuing. These are the parallelisms between logic and ethics.

Husserl points out that there is a hierarchy of values starting from sensuous values to spiritual values. Sensuous values are only as a means for making spiritual values possible. Among spiritual

values themselves, there are no hierarchies. There are three kinds of spiritual values. They are aesthetic values, epistemic values and value of universal love which he later on interprets as universal ethical love.

In the course of time, Husserl realised the limitations of his ethics based on static phenomenology and goes on to the next stage of ethics, viz., the ethics based on genetic phenomenology. I would say the limitations of static phenomenological ethics are primarily two. The first one is that it demands excessive objectivity in ethical theory. Ethical individual is a spectator, devoid of any attachments to himself or to the ethical principles on the basis of which he is supposed to live. He is an individual without any particular responsibilities. The individual's affirmation of Brentano's categorical imperative leads to him to self-alienation. His ethical decision is purely formal. The second is that the static phenomenological ethics fails to recognise the role of feelings and emotions in human life. They do have a significant role in our lives, Husserl also realized that his ethics based static phenomenological principles was an extension of Brentano's ethics and Husserl was not happy with it. He, Husserl, wanted to have a new beginning in ethics based is of genetic phenomenology.

GENETIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL ETHICS

The characteristics of ethics based on genetic phenomenology are the following:

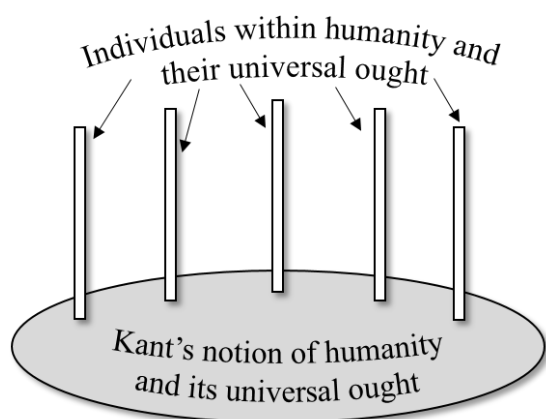
In his genetic phenomenology, (1) intersubjectivity is the centre of phenomenological thinking. It is intersubjectivity which emphasizes history, character building of personal projects and the process of renewal. Self-responsibility is the core. Intersubjective convictions, cultural traditions of the self, the passive association (co-existence) of oneself with other, the acceptance of tradition of community, etc. are important to the new ethics. The individual is the inheritor of a tradition and the tradition changes individual to become a member of the community. The community is the community of self-responsible people. This means that Husserl moves from the individual ethics to the community-oriented or community-based ethics (i.e., communitarian ethics) or to social ethics. A true community functions like a person. It means that the community-based ethics consists of personalities of higher order.

Husserl brings in the notion of (2) horizon to its practical possibilities. Husserl points out that the ethical value of will does not depend on objective attainability, i.e., he is not happy with his former formulation of categorical imperative based on Brentano's insights, viz., do the best that is attainable. Instead, now he would say "do the best that is subjectively attainable".

Ethics is not merely to define good but also to guide the development of character of each individual. Each individual needs to develop his ethical attitude. To define what he means by ethical attitude, Husserl developed the notions of (1) absolute ought and (2) what he called the notion of universal ethical love.

THE NOTION OF ABSOLUTE OUGHT

Absolute ought is a value rooted in the self. Personal ought is absolute for each individual. What it means is this. Kant's universal ought is cut into pieces and each individual, while being rooted in the universal ought, absorbs a piece or a share, of it and that ought's character remains absolute for each individual, i.e., if Kant's ought is for the whole of humanity, Husserl's ought is for each individual. It is shown diagrammatically shown below:



It is by adhering to my personal, individual, absolute ought that I maintain my status as "I am who I am" (The Book of Exodus, 3/14). An individual's absolute ought is absolute for that individual and that gives value to that individual. This personal absolute ought is correlative of my rational will. The ought is the expression of truth of my will. Personal identity is established through lasting convictions, rooted in personal absolute ought. Without character, without convictions, the self is fragmented. The categorical imperative of Husserl's early static ethics, which was the modified version of Brentano, now is determined by the absolute ought of the individual and it is different for each individual. For the categorical imperative of Husserl is no more do the best that is attainable rather "do the best that is subjectively attainable". And, each individual is able to attain the best that is subjectively attainable with his absolute ought. This is how one gets placed in one's lifeworld. It would also mean that each individual's absolute ought places a burden upon him for he needs to come up to the expectations of his absolute ought for its fulfilment.

How do I determine my individual particular absolute ought? My individual particular absolute ought is a vocation, a call (vocare). We feel we are called to a particular realm of values. The call is an inner drive, an inner urge. (Heidegger would put it as the call of Being.). Consider for example

the teacher in Patna who prepares students for super 30 and several social workers working selflessly for the upliftment of the poor and the sick, helping people in the context of Covid-19. It is all a part of one's vocation, an inner call. It is only when we choose a vocation, in compliance with our absolute ought, expressed in an inner call, do we have an authentic life. Such a vocation gives rational goal to our lives. By realising our goal, we realize our true self. Such a rational goal is our personal telos.

Ordinarily, we do not consider our job, say as that of a teacher or an officer as a vocation and as an ethical task. It appears to be a routine task to be performed in a classroom or in an office. But Husserl holds that a job is an ethical task since it contributes to the identity of the individual and since it concerns the other as well as the society. A vocational choice makes a man truly human. Vocational choice is connected to who am and what am I. Vocational choice constitutes the essential structure of a human person. Vocation gives an absolute ought, a personal telos. Only through vocational choices the culture of humanity is preserved. Ethical development is possible only through commitment to one's vocation. Norms of the community arise only from the vocations of members. It is our responsibility to adopt ethical attitudes, depending on the norms of the community.

An experience not only has a cognitive value; it has several other kinds values attached to it. Such values are mental, emotional, cognitive, physical, physiological, spiritually, etc. We have feeling for a thing only when it is considered valuable; when we assign value to it, i.e., when we consider it to be a must for us.

Husserl distinguishes between two different kinds of values: the objective and subjective values. In his static phenomenological ethical phase, he was concerned with objective values. At the genetic phenomenological ethical stage, he is not concerned with objective values at all. But the genetic phenomenological value is the absolute ethical love. And the value of absolute ethical love takes precedence over all other values. All absolute values are equally absolute. In the case of conflict between or among absolute values, there is no rational choice of preference of one value over the other. In such context, Husserl would say that there is only a tragic sacrifice of one absolute value over the other absolute values. This means that there is some kind of irrationality of one's choice of absolute values. This tragic sacrifice of one absolute value over the other has a meaning only in the context of religious ethos and divine milieu. Siddharth, a happy prince, giving up his royal throne and becoming mendicant, thus becoming Buddha, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to God (Book of Genesis, 22, 1 to 14), Saint Francis of Assisi becoming a mendicant, Kierkegaard's withdrawal of engagement to Regina Olsen, and, mind you, there are

innumerable such instances. Husserl's concept of absolute ethical love has meaning only in a divine world as the ultimate telos of ethical life and it is a communitarian ideal. In the context of a community, universal ethical love takes the form of universal value of reason. This means that the universal community is a community of thinking and reflecting people. This community is founded on universal ethical love.

What about those who move from one relation to another, one vocation to another? In the early period of genetic phenomenology, he would not say it is unethical, rather he would say that it is non-ethical, it is only a-ethical, indicating lack of stability of the individual concerned. However, his views changed in the later part of genetic phenomenology. In 1936, in the *Crisis of European Sciences*, he holds that every vocation gives personal identity to the individual and each vocation can have an absolute ought in built in it. What this means is that one can change one's vocation. For example, one can be a teacher, then one can go on to be a professional researcher, then one can be an administrator and some of these vocations can be simultaneous as well for example a teacher can be a mother, a social worker, and a nurse as well, all depends upon time and necessity. Every vocation implies sacrifice and this sacrifice is a tragic element in human life. Motherhood is the highest of all vocations.

We do not understand our self in isolation. And, our personal telos is influenced by others. Our choice of values is not arbitrary or exclusively subjective. Rather, it involves inherited traditions, the influence of people whom we hold in high regard (i.e., peers) and the promptings of elders at large. This means that ethics is not totally and exclusively a personal phenomenon or a strictly personal and subjective choice. All values are related to or bound by the universe of human community. In fact, we are subjected to belief and value systems that we have inherited from the society and community at large. One's vocation may go above the standard norms of the community, but it is never opposed to its tradition. We come to understand our vocation by an active reflection on our identity and on our life in the society in which and in relation to which we live.

Community is the personality of a higher order. Community bears intersubjective character. The individual is a member of the current community as well as the historical community. In order for the individual to preserve and maintain himself, he needs to preserve his community identity as well as his tradition. He needs to be a member of the present community as well as the historical community. Community is an "organic we". I am of the opinion that good examples of such a community will be the joint family or the teachers' association of a college or a university. Community strives to achieve its goal in the fashion of an individual. There are similarities between the individual striving to achieve the goal and the community trying to achieve its goal. This is what I mean by saying that there is an analogous relationship between the individual and the

community. The individual is the foundation of the community, i.e., the community is rooted in the "I", i.e., rooted in the individual. The community has a personality of its own; it can will and act. In this sense it has an absolute ought like the individual. Only by adhering to its absolute ought, can the community preserve its unity. The community has its habits and the members receive them by passive association, i.e., just by being together with others of the community. Passive association implies an attitude of receptivity. In a community (like a joint family) the absolute telos of an individual cannot exclude the absolute ought of another member of the community. An individual's absolute ought is to contribute to the common goal. It would appear as if one's will is (with) the will of the other.

What happens is this. The tradition of the community is absorbed by the individual and the individual, in turn, passes himself on to the tradition of the community. Consider for example Gandhiji, the father of our nation. He was one of the best products of the Hinduism and he contributed the best of his life to Hinduism. An individual is socialized by identifying himself with the community. There is a give and take between the individual and the community. I am in the community means that I am not only a member of the community but also that I represent the community. The community is not just a collection of a conglomeration of individuals, community has an organic unity, i.e., the community is an "organic we". The absolute telos of the individual merges with the absolute will of the community. In some respects, the individual is more important than the community and at the same time in some other respects, the reverse is also true. It all depends upon the context. If there is a breakdown in the community, the individual will also suffer. That is because we, the members of the community, share the same lifeworld.

From the notion of lifeworld of the individual, Husserl moves on to the notion of home world. Home world is exemplified not just by a joint family, but by a community of people living in the same locality, using the same street, reading same or similar newspapers, maybe using the same shops for purchase, may be eating similar kind of food, etc. In other words, it stands for an integrated village (say like that of Auroville near Pondicherry). This home world is contrasted with the alien world. I am a stranger in the alien world. But gradually I get to know the people and the surroundings and in the course of time the alien world becomes my home world. The alien world is obliterated when I get merged with the home world.

Husserl speaks of three different kinds of communities. The first, is the ethical community of love where the aim and striving of each member is a part of the aims and striving of other members of the community. In such a community, members help each other to recognise the absolute telos of each individual. Consider for example a group of scientists working together to achieve a

common goal. Look at the TV images of scientists at Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) when they successfully launch a satellite, how they express their happiness and joy, how they congratulate each other after the success. Each one works for the common goal; each one helps the other to achieve that goal. The second, is the case where production of an objective value is the paradigm. This happens in a factory. For example, say in a Maruti car factory or Hero Honda motorcycle factory. All the employees contribute their might to the production of a vehicle. The maximum production of the objective value, viz., vehicle, is the goal. The third, is a community having the capacity to lay down and prescribe rules, regulations and guidelines for others to follow. An example would be a group of (Supreme Court) judges giving final judgements. They can prescribe norms that the community has to follow (say as in the case of say Ayodhya judgement). Similarly, the Academic Council of a university decides what should be taught in the University (by prescribing and approving the syllabus and the like). All of them do have a common will and they lay down their own rules for others to follow and they follow their own ethical standards for the common good.

UNIVERSAL ETHICAL LOVE

It is difficult to understand Husserl's notion of higher order personality without grasping the notion of universal ethical love. The notion of universal ethical love means oneself for the other without condition, reservation or inhibition. This love for the other has no boundaries, no restrictions. By binding oneself to the other, the individual places the other on a position of superiority over oneself. This act is not momentary, it requires constant commitment, re-commitment and continuous renewal to develop it. It means that the other has a value and personal worth, not just usefulness or pragmatic value, but intrinsic value and personal worth. My love for the other is for the fulfilment of the other's absolute ought. In it the other's wish is my wish, i.e., what you wish I wish, what you will I will, in your sufferings I too suffer, in your joy, I too am joyful.

Husserl's universal ethical love is not an empty slogan; rather it is my concrete love for the other. The other is necessary for the survival of humanity as a whole. It is love of oneself given freely to the other. It is not any selfish love, or a calculative love, or a pragmatic love, or love for profit. It is what may be called rational love. Rationality here means our openness to the other, it is recognizing the personal worth of the other. Universal, ethical love is founded on community built on universal reason. Members of such a community are involved in constant renewal and continuous critique of the community. Such an activity is open to all. But only a very few opt for it (Gandhiji opted for it). Universal ethical love is an infinite love, is an absolute love. It creates humanity of a higher order.

Only through rational faith in God can we overcome apparent conflict and opposition or clash between the realm of faith and the domain of reason. Rational faith in God gives ultimate meaning to the absolute ought. Only by rational faith in God, can I withstand despair and fate, untimely death and the scourge of natural calamities. I can find meanings in catastrophes, natural calamities, sudden and untimely death and suffering only by rational faith in God. Human activity must be governed by God. Yet, human activity must be free and responsible. Faith in God is the condition for self-preservation and self-realization. By the practical motive of seeing everyone as a child of God can we reach ethical ideal of universal love.

After having discussed Husserl's treatment of phenomenological ethics at some length, some comments are placed below.

AGAPE AND EROS

In the Greek language, two expressions are used to indicate love. They are agape and eros. Agape stands for self-giving love. It is that on the basis of which Gandhi died, it is what made McMillion give up his life during the second world war. Eros, on the other hand, is selfish, carnal love, love for profit, it is a calculative love. Universal ethical love, about which Husserl speaks, is agape.

(2) It appears to me, however, what is missing in Husserl's ethics is an analysis of the relationship between love and reason. Husserl seems to think that if reason and love are placed at the divine world order, they can be linked together.

(3) One more interesting fact to be noted is this. Husserl was born in a Jewish family. There is no evidence from his early life that he had any deep religiosity. He used the term God only twice in his *Ideas I* and that usage was in the context of a query, viz., is the transcendental ego as absolute the same as or different from God as the absolute? (vide *Ideas I*, section 51 and 58). His wife was a Christian and due to her influence and persuasion, he became a Christian. Husserl was baptized on 26 April 1886, being named Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, in the municipal Evangelical Church of Augsburg Parish in Vienna. (I got this information from Professor Lester Embree, the then Chairman, Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenological Research (CARP), Florida Atlantic University, USA., when he came to Pondicherry, India in June 1991 to deliver lectures on phenomenology in the first workshop cum seminar of Centre for Phenomenological Studies.) She presented him a copy of the Bible shortly after his baptism, and to please her, Husserl kept it on the right side of his study table. Later, she made inquiries with him to find out whether he ever read it at any time. His answer was a no and the reason he stated was that had he read it; he would have lost certainty about his philosophy. However, this baptism was for him the fulfilment of what

he perceived to be his calling to a conversion, viz., to build a philosophy in the manner of mathematics, a serious and sure science. It is phenomenology, as a primordial legitimate philosophy that was in his opinion, to pave the way towards God and a truthful life. And, yet, Husserl openly did not advocate the God of religions or the scriptures, not even the God of philosophy. What is it that prevented him from accepting a religious life style when many of his students or disciples were brought to religion, God and sainthood (I am referring to Edith Stein who was Husserl's personal assistant from 1916 to 1918) by philosophizing in the spirit of Husserl's phenomenology. Perhaps the main reason lies in the very character of Husserl's phenomenology itself which confines itself to the study of consciousness and the transcendental ego as the absolute. Husserl's point is this. Because he considers transcendental ego to be absolute, it goes against his philosophical authenticity and intellectual sincerity to himself to accept something else also to be absolute. Acceptance of some other as absolute, other than consciousness, would be a contradiction to what Husserl and his phenomenology stands for. The philosophical wisdom of Husserl forced him not to cross his self-imposed boundaries. The ego centrality of consciousness makes the transcendental ego absolute, although this absolute is not the absolute of religions or scriptures. It appears to me that, while he was busy with his static phenomenology, the thought of God did not cross his mind, i.e., say that he was indifferent to God. Husserl nowhere in his writings speaks of a personal experience of God or faith. Although Phenomenology can be said loosely to be the study and examination of the objects of conscious acts, Husserl nowhere examined God as the object of religious acts. But a totally different Husserl appears along with genetic phenomenology, where God appears as a theoretical possibility. I would say Husserl's silence on religious and the scriptural God is because he was caught on an intellectual paradox, arising from his vocation to phenomenology. While he is unable to overcome the subjectivity of the transcendental ego, he would nevertheless accept the Kantian God. Husserl's total intellectual honesty and complete sincerity to his vocation is remarkable and praiseworthy.

To put it phenomenologically, the existence as well as the belief in God undergo phenomenological reductions (both eidetic reduction and psychological reduction) in his static phenomenological approach in *Ideal I*. However, in his genetic phenomenology, from *Ideas II* onwards, his approach to God changed very much. Now, he finds meaning in God. He demands a rational religious faith in God. Such a faith in God appears to be the answer to many ethical dilemmas and moral problems. It appears very strange that a person, who had very ambiguous attitude towards religion and God at the static stage of his phenomenological development, declares very loudly and firmly the need for rational religious commitment at the ethical stage of genetic phenomenology. However, it may also be remarked that Husserl does not extend any such religious commitments to the remaining part of genetic phenomenological works such as *Ideas 2&3*, *Cartesian Meditations*, *Crisis of European* and the like. This also means that rational God

who appears as an answer to ethical problems and moral dilemmas does not appear to be an answer to the general problems of human existence. This insight may have occurred in Husserl due to Kant's influence for in Kant God is confined to the moral domain. So is Husserl's approach to God. Doesn't Husserl's approach to God in static phenomenology and genetic phenomenology echo Kant's attitude to God in his Critique of Pure Reason and in the Critique of Practical Reason?

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V. C. THOMAS PhD

Formerly Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Pondicherry University, Puducherry. Email: ashishantony@yahoo.com
