

Varieties of Other-Experience: Intersubjectivity in Husserl

Rafy Vezhaparambil

Introduction

From the Leibnizian conception of self as a ‘windowless monad’ philosophical reflection on the relationship of self with other selves has travelled a long way. Contemporary philosophy evinces a heightened consciousness of an inextricable entanglement of human subjects with one another in place of the modernist preoccupation with an insulated subjectivity. Today inter-subjectivity is taken to be a more fundamental characterization of the human condition than isolated subjectivity. Gabriel Marcel would claim that for humans ‘to exist is to co-exist’; for Martin Heidegger Dasein (his term of ‘man’) is a ‘being-with’, the hyphenation indicating the essential nature of human beings to be in relationship with one another.

While the fact of intersubjectivity is a settled matter, different views exist on how to conceive of and give a philosophical account of it. Perhaps, the most profound and extensive studies in the field have been done in the Phenomenological Movement. Phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas, to mention a few, have provided their own differing phenomenological descriptions of inter-subjectivity.

This present article seeks to examine Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity, especially against the backdrop of the criticism levelled against it by later thinkers. One such criticism is that it takes account only of our thematic consciousness of the other, (which occurs in sciences like psychology), not the intersubjectively lived out every-day life, studied especially by Heidegger. Thus, according to one author,

Classical phenomenology may be subject to an individualist bias that privileges first-person subjectivity over against communal relationality and leads to the neglect of I-you connectedness. This neglect is most

clearly apparent with the transcendental phenomenology of subjectivity [...].¹

One possible ground for such a criticism is the fact that very often scholarly accounts of Husserl's philosophy of intersubjectivity have been given exclusively in terms of his "transcendental theory of empathy"² to the neglect of various other kinds of inter-subjective experience Husserl has discussed in his writings.³ It is true that this theory poses the question of intersubjectivity as an epistemological question of thematic knowledge of the other: How do I *know* the other as other? However, the thematic knowledge of the other is just one way of experiencing the other; therefore, Husserl is often accused of neglecting other forms of intersubjectivity.

The present article seeks to show that empathy, or the thematic knowledge of the other is not the only intersubjective experience that Husserl examines. We find in him also examination of other kinds of other-experiences such as (i) experiencing the other as a member of the human family, (ii) experiencing the other in communicative acts, and (iii) the pre-thematic experience of the other. Indeed, in Husserlian account the first two kinds of experiencing the other are seen as being founded on the transcendental empathic experience of the other; however, they are different from the way one experiences the other in the transcendental subjectivity. Husserl also is aware of intersubjectivity that comes about otherwise than through empathy and modes founded on it. We shall first give an account of Husserl's transcendental theory of empathy, situating it within the wider philosophical discussions on intersubjectivity and

¹ Beata Stawarska, *Between you and I: Dialogical Phenomenology*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009), ix-x. Cited by Patricia Meindl & Dan Zahavi, in "From Communication to Communalization: A Husserlian Account", *Continental Philosophy Review* 56, no. 3 (2023): 361-77

² Husserl's exposition of the "transcendental theory of empathy" is given in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation

³ The three *Husserliana* volumes (13,14,15) contain very extensive research Husserl has made on the theme of inter-subjectivity; in addition, treatment of intersubjectivity can also be seen his other works such as *Cartesian Meditations*, *Ideas II*, *Crisis of the European Sciences*, *The First Philosophy* etc

within the immediate context of Husserl's own philosophy. In section 2 we shall examine Heidegger's criticism of theories of empathy. We shall argue there that even though Heidegger's critique is valid vis-à-vis certain versions of the theory of empathy, it does not invalidate Husserl's transcendental theory of empathy, in so far as the transcendental viewpoint is a valid philosophical stance. In section 3 we shall deal with Husserl's non-transcendental accounts of intersubjectivity. In the final section 4 we shall show that Husserlian writings show that he has even dealt with inter-subjectivity in terms of our pre-thematic, pre-predicative engagement with the other, the type of intersubjectivity studied especially by Heidegger.

1. Other-Experiences at the Transcendental Level

Transcendental subjectivity is reached through the performance of transcendental *epoche* and transcendental reduction. According to Husserl the epistemological question 'how is knowledge possible' can only be answered from the viewpoint of transcendental subjectivity; moreover, if true being is what is correlated with acts of knowing then an authentic science of being is possible only after settling the epistemological question. This radical priority of epistemology demands that it can be done only at the level of transcendental subjectivity, that is, at the level of a subjectivity that does not presuppose any knowledge and being, and which is the constitutive source of all being. The performance of transcendental *epoche* and reduction takes us to transcendental subjectivity. From the standpoint of transcendental subjectivity "every sense that any existent whatever has or can have for me- in respect of its "what" and its "it exists and actually is" is a sense *in* and *arising from* my intentional life ..."⁴ Every such sense is to be clarified phenomenologically by laying bare in clear descriptions the intentional acts that constitute them. If, therefore, something appears in my

⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 91. Hereafter referred to as *CM*.

experience as having the sense of “other ego” then that sense needs to be clarified by laying bare its constitutive intentional acts. This is what Husserl’s transcendental theory of empathy does. It is a version of the ‘theory of empathy’. So, we seek first to clarify this wider context of the philosophical discussions on intersubjectivity within which Husserl’s specific theory is situated.

1.1 Theories of Empathy

The central question for a philosophy of inter-subjectivity is that of accounting for our knowledge of the other. That we possess such knowledge seems to be self-evident- only a die-hard solipsist would deny it. Thus, the question may be formulated as: given the fact that we have genuine knowledge of other people’s psyche and its intentionalities, how does one account for or describe this consciousness? The enigmatic character of the question comes to the fore when we are confronted with the fact that the two types of perception which alone are traditionally held to be the acts of consciousness that put us in immediate contact with realities- namely, inner perception and outer perception- do not put us in immediate contact with others’ psychic life. External perception can give us only empirical objects, including the other’s physical body, and their sense-qualities; but the psychic life of the other is neither an empirical object nor a sense quality of such an object. Similarly, inner perception can give me only my own psychic life; other person’s psychic life by definition is not part of my psychic life. Thus, it can be given neither through external perception nor through inner perception. What kind of act then is our consciousness of the other?

One influential answer to the question is that we know the other person and his experiences through an act inference.⁵ According to this theory,

⁵ According to Edith Stein, “The theory of inference by analogy to explain the origin of the experience of foreign psychic life was almost generally acknowledged before Lipps opposed it.” Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, tran. Waltraut Stein in *The Collected Works of Edith Stein* vol. III, (Trivandrum: Carmel Publishing Centre, 1998), 26. Further, Stein points out that J.S. Mill was a strong proponent of the theory. Cfr. *Ibid.*

what I know immediately and most directly is myself and my own mental states; I know directly also how my body expresses my mental states such as anger, love etc. When I perceive through external perception the bodily expressions and gesticulations of the other, I infer, on the basis of the similarity that these bodily expressions have with my own bodily expressions when I undergo such experiences, that the other must be undergoing the same kind of experience. According to the theory, I do not directly or immediately perceive another person's anger, for instance, but make the following inference: When I am angry, I shout and fret; this body over there is shouting and fretting, so he must be experiencing the same thing as what I experienced when my I shouted and fretted, namely, anger. I make an inference to it through the medium of his bodily expressions. Thus, on this view, essentially our other-experience is a mediate one.

A group of theories, usually named 'theories of empathy' rejects this view and hold that the other and his psychic life is given to us immediately and directly. In these theories 'empathy' is the name given to the act of consciousness that gives us immediately the other ego and his mental states. Thus, in philosophy the term 'empathy' does not have the connotation it usually has in ordinary language, where it connotes a meaning that is in line with its literal sense, which is 'feeling the other from within him'. The word suggests that one has empathy when one is able to feel the other from within him, that we somehow enter the within of the other. In contrast, in philosophy it refers to an epistemic consciousness rather than to an emotive one. The term is the translation of the German word *Einfühlung* which was used by Theodor Lipps to refer to our consciousness of the other.⁶ It is in this sense of an epistemic

⁶ On the origin and history of the term 'empathy' Dan Zahavi writes: "The notion of empathy doesn't have a long history. The German term *Einfühlung* was first used in 1873 in the domain of aesthetics by the philosopher Robert Vischer, but was then taken over by Theodor Lipps, who introduced it into the field of social cognition and used it to designate our basic capacity for understanding others as minded creatures. It was Lipps's notion that Edward Titchener, the American psychologist, had in mind when he translated *Einfühlung* as 'empathy.'" Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Kindle Edition) 103.

consciousness in which another person's psychic life becomes a thematic object for me that the term appears in the discussions on intersubjectivity. Edith Stein defines it as the knowledge of a foreign consciousness.⁷ Other important thinkers who use the term in this sense are Max Scheler, Edith Stein and Husserl, even though their descriptions of the act of empathy differ from each other.⁸

1.2 Husserl's Transcendental Theory of Empathy

Husserl puts forward a version of the theory of empathy; he calls it "the transcendental theory of empathy",⁹ since it describes our consciousness of the other as an achievement of transcendental consciousness accessed through the performance of transcendental *epoche* and reduction. According to him the other is given to us directly and immediately, not through a mediate inference. The task of the philosopher of intersubjectivity is to identify the intentionality that gives us directly the other and to describe that act.

Husserl gives a clear phenomenological description of 'empathy' (understood as the act that presents us the other ego and his experiences), in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation. It is important to bear in mind the immediate context within which Husserl develops this theory. Husserl's interest in empathy is intimately related to his transcendental account of "objective world". From the transcendental viewpoint, as we cited Husserl above, "... every sense that any existent whatever has or can have for me – in respect of its "what" and its "it exists and actually is" – is a sense *in* and *arising from* my intentional life."¹⁰ And the world appears to me in my straightforward attitude as having the sense of an objective world. Transcendental phenomenology's task, therefore, is to point out and describe the intentional acts in which this sense of the world

⁷ Cfr. Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, pp. 6-7

⁸ For a critical discussion on the different ways in which empathy is construed by Lipps and Max Scheler see Edith Stien, *On the Problem of Empathy*, pp. 11-35

⁹ CM p. 92

¹⁰ CM p. 91

as an “objective world” is constituted. Now, that the world is given to me as having the sense of “objective world” means nothing other than that it is given to me as “a world given to all other egos, actual and possible, as the same”. Therefore, Husserl sees that the first task of the phenomenological clarification of the sense “objective world” is the clarification of the constitution of the other ego in my own ego. And that is the task, according to Husserl, of transcendental theory of empathy. The second step would be the clarification of the constitution of the community of other egos and how “objective world” is constituted by the inter-subjective community of egos. Thus, Husserl develops his theory of empathy as an essential first step towards the phenomenological clarification of the sense “objective world”. Within such a project it is quite natural that it is the thematic consciousness of the other that comes up for explanation. Given the transcendental context of the theory it is also to be expected that the act of empathy be construed as the act that builds the first bridge to the other ego.

Husserl says that the act of empathy (or the intentional act gives the other ego) is in fact “an analogizing appresentation”,¹¹ and he distinguishes it from acts of external perception and acts of inner perception. Husserl also categorically denies that it is an act of analogical inference.¹² Now the phenomenological task is to describe the essence of this act.

Let us first clarify the meaning of appresentation or apperception. Husserl holds that apperception is not a characteristic unique to other-experiences alone, for an “apperception occurs even in external experience.”¹³ But, the kind of apperception involved in external perception is different from the one which is involved in our consciousness of the other. Thus, there are similarities and differences between the apperception involved in external perception and the one

¹¹ CM pp. 50-51

¹² “... but it by no means follows that there would be an inference from analogy. Apperception is not inference, not a thinking act.” CM p. 111

¹³ CM p. 109

involved in other-experience. The first similarity is that in both cases the intentionally meant objects contains more than what is strictly or intuitively given. For instance, every act of external perception involves an apperception in so far as while what is intuitively given is the front side of the table, the intentionally meant object of perception is not this front side, but the table itself which has a back side as well which though not intuitively given is con-intended.¹⁴ In the same way, in experience of the other what is intuitively given is the physical body (*Körper*) of the other but we apprehend it as a psycho-physical organism (*Leib*). However, in spite of the similarity, the apperception involved in empathy is different from the one involved in external perception of mere physical objects. The latter kind of acts involve the possibility bringing to strict givenness the adumbratively given back side of the physical object by moving it or the perceiver appropriately. This possibility is ruled out in the case of the apperception of other ego. In this kind of acts while the physical body of the other is what is given strictly and intuitively, we apprehend it as an *animate body*, even though the *anima* or psyche of that body can never be given to me originally.¹⁵

The second similarity between the apperception involved in the perceptions of everyday objects and the one involved in empathy is that both acts involve a transference of an originally constituted sense from one object to the other.¹⁶ For instance, suppose we come across a very primitive wooden artefact for the first time and immediately apprehend it as a kind of seating furniture; what has happened is that a sense (sense of objects as “seating furniture”) primally constituted in relation to other objects in the past, to which the present perceptual object refers us back,

¹⁴ “An appresentation occurs even in external experience, since the strictly given seen front of the physical thing always and necessarily appresents a rear aspect and prescribes for it a more or less determinate content.” CM p. 109

¹⁵ “... experiencing someone else cannot be a matter of just this kind of appresentation (namely, appresentation of physical objects) ... Appresentation of this sort involves the possibility of verification by a corresponding fulfilling presentation (the back becomes the front); whereas, in the case of appresentation which would lead over into the other original sphere, such verification must be excluded a priori.” CM p. 109

¹⁶ Cfr. CM p. 111

has now been transferred to the new object on the basis of their similarity. Husserl says that "... each everyday experience involves an analogizing transfer of an originally instituted objective sense to a new case ..."¹⁷ Similarly, in the case of knowledge of the other too, there is a primal constitution of sense and its transfer on the basis of similarity. The primal constitution of the sense "ego" happens in relation to *my* psychophysical body and that sense is transferred to the other body which appears to me now on the basis of its similarity with my body. But upon closer examination one sees that the primal constitution of sense and its transfer in empathy differ radically from the apperception of everyday physical objects. The difference is that while in the case of the latter the primally institutive original is not actually present but only "pointed back", and the original constitution itself does not happen at present but is a past event, in the case of empathy "the primally institutive original is always livingly present, and the primal instituting itself is always going on in a livingly effective manner".¹⁸ In other words, in apperceptive experiences of the other, my own psychophysical organism in relation to which the sense "ego" is originally instituted is livingly present and the constitution of the sense itself is originally performed, before it is transferred to the other. This is because "*ego* and *alter ego* are always necessarily given in an original "pairing". Let us clarify next what this phenomenon of "original pairing" is.

The phenomenon of "pairing" is an act in which a pair is *originally* constituted.¹⁹ Wherever, a pair is originally (as opposed to "emptily") given there is an act of original pairing. Thus it is a phenomenon that happens not only in connection with the analogizing appresentation

¹⁷ CM p. 111

¹⁸ CM p. 112

¹⁹ Husserl makes a distinction between "original" constitution of a categorical objectivity from an "empty" referring to it in language. Categorical objectivities such as pairs, multiplicities, predicatively formed state of affairs etc. are originally constituted when the elements that enter into the structure of the categorical objectivities are given in sense perception and on the basis of that we carry out the respective categorical acts. Cfr. VI *Logical Investigation* ##48-51. Once they have been so constituted, they can be "emptily" referred to without the actual performance of the categorical act and the underlying sense-intuitions.

involved in our acts of knowledge of the other, but as Husserl says “ is a universal phenomenon of transcendental subjectivity.”²⁰ Wherever, for example, a pair of apples, a pair of birds etc. are originally given, there these acts are present too. The phenomenological task here is to describe this type of acts. And Husserl’s description is as follows. To begin with, two data are given intuitionally and with prominence in one consciousness. Then there takes place an intentional overreaching, that is, the act that presents originally one object reaches out to the other, bringing about a simultaneous intending of both. Thirdly, “a living mutual awakening” takes place, that is, the presentation of the one awakens the presentation of the other. In this process there takes place “an overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other.”

Now we may apply the above description of the general structure of any act of original pairing to the specific case of pairing involved in the apperceptive consciousness of the other ego. My live body is always there and sensually prominent; I experience it as an animate organism, that is, as having the sense of a physical body animated by a psyche. Now while my body is thus present in my experience, another physical body enters my field of experience. There takes place an intentional overreaching in that my live consciousness of my body reaches out to the other appearing body bringing about a transfer of sense. Thus, the sense “animate organism” which was originally constituted in relation to my body is transferred to the other body.²¹

But what explains the fact that I apperceive the appearing body as *another* ego, another psychophysical organism and not, so to say, as an

²⁰ CM p. 112

²¹ “I, as the primordial psychophysical Ego, am always prominent in my primordial field of perception, regardless of whether I pay attention to myself and turn toward myself with some activity or other. In particular, my live body is always there and sensuously prominent; but, in addition to that and likewise with primordial originariness, it is equipped with the specific sense of an animate organism. Now in case there presents itself, as outstanding in my primordial sphere, a body “similar” it must enter into a phenomenal *pairing* with mine- it seems clear without more ado that, with the transfer of sense, this body must forthwith appropriate from mine the sense: animate organism.” CM p. 113

extension of my own ego? This is accounted for by the fact that “what is appresented by virtue of aforesaid analogizing can never attain actual presence, never become an object of perception proper.”²² In other words, it is the fact that the other ego and his experiences cannot be given to me in the same way as my own ego and its experiences are given to me (namely, in inner perception), that explains the fact that the other ego is apprehended as *other* and not an extension of me.

2. Heidegger’s Critique of Theory of Empathy

A compelling critique of the account of intersubjectivity in terms of empathy has come from Martin Heidegger, who also puts forward an alternative account of intersubjectivity. He faults ‘the empathic model of intersubjectivity’ for presupposing that empathy provides “the first ontological bridge from one’s own subject, which is given proximally as alone, to the other subject, which is proximally quite closed off.”²³ According to him empathy, conceived as a thematic and epistemic consciousness of the other, is not our first “bridge” to the other. Prior to it we already and always stand intersubjectively connected to other subjects. The basic state of Dasein, according to Heidegger, is ‘Being-in-the-world’, the ‘in’ here being understood as expressing not a spatial relation (like water ‘in’ the jug), but a practical dealing with the entities in the environment. It is not as a knower, but as a user of objects that Dasein primarily and for the most part deal with environmental entities. To this practically oriented Dasein the environmental entities reveal themselves as ‘ready-to-hand’ (as tools). Other Daseins are ‘encountered’ in an elemental manner in the references the tools bear to them. As Heidegger says, they bear

... an essential assignment or reference to possible wearers, for instance, for whom it should be ‘cut to the figure’. Similarly, when material is put

²² CM p. 112.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1962), 162

to use, we encounter its producer or ‘supplier’ as on who ‘serves’ well or badly. When for example, we walk along the edge of a field but ‘outside it’, the field shows itself a belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept up by him; the book we have used was bought at So-and-So’s shop by such-and-such a person, and so forth.²⁴

Therefore, Heidegger can say that ‘Being-with’ other Daseins is constitutive of the very Being of Dasein. He asserts, “So far as Dasein is, at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being”;²⁵ Again, “... Being with others belongs to the Being of Dasein”.²⁶ Prior to empathy, *Dasein* is already in intersubjective relation with other *Daseins*. So, Heidegger can say that, “empathy does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does ‘empathy’ become possible.”²⁷

It is to be noted that this kind of acquaintance with the other is a pre-empathic and pre-thematic acquaintance. As Heidegger puts it, it “is not an acquaintance derived from knowledge about them, but a proximally existential kind of Being ...”.²⁸

Thus, in an elemental, non-thematic way our being is already and always involved with other Daseins. It precedes all explicitly thematic consciousness of the other. It is in solicitude, and not in empathy, that for the first time the thematic givenness of the other happens.²⁹ In fact, when such a thematic givenness of the other in solicitude happens it has the character of a ‘disclosure’ of an already existing state of affairs rather than that of a first contact with the other. As Heidegger says, “... the explicit disclosure of the Other in solicitude grows only out of one’s

²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time* pp.153-54

²⁵ Ibid, 163

²⁶ Ibid., 160

²⁷ Ibid, 160

²⁸ Ibid., 161

²⁹ “... in concerned solicitude the Other is proximally disclosed.”, *Being and Time*, p.161. The following citation shows that this disclosure the other in solicitude is a thematic one: “Such a disclosure of the other (which is indeed thematic, but not in the manner of theoretical psychology ...” (Ibid, 161)

primarily Being with him in each case”³⁰

Heidegger thinks that if there is no such a thing as empathy in the sense of an act that brings about the first contact of an isolated ego with another ego cut off from all others, then it is incumbent on philosophy to explain how serious thinkers are misled to conceive of our relation to other egos in terms of empathy. He assigns this task to “the special hermeneutic of empathy”.³¹

According to him thinkers are misled to construe intersubjectivity in terms of empathy on account of a peculiar phenomenological situation in which the everyday Dasein finds himself. Just as Dasein’s primary mode of relating to the environmental entities is that of circumspective dealings, his primary orientation to other Dasein’s is “solicitude” But “solicitude dwells proximally and for the most part in the deficient or at least Indifferent modes”. Examples of such deficient modes of solicitude are “being ... against, or without one another, passing one another by, not “mattering” to one another”.³² Since Dasein dwells most of the time in such deficient modes of solicitude Dasein’s “knowing oneself gets lost in such ways as aloofness, hiding oneself away, or putting on a disguise”. In other words, on account of the deficient modes of solicitude in which everyday Dasein maintains itself vis-à-vis others,³³ it understands itself as aloof and cut off from others. Therefore, when the theoretical question of understanding the psychical life of others is raised, it misunderstands the problem as one of creating a first bridge to others from a solitary subject essentially cut off from others³⁴

³⁰ Ibid 161

³¹ “The special hermeneutic of empathy will have to show how Being-with-one-another and Dasein’s knowing of itself are led astray and obstructed by the various possibilities of Being which Dasein itself possesses, so that a genuine ‘understanding’ gets suppressed, and Dasein takes refuge in substitutes; the possibility of understanding the stranger correctly presupposes such a hermeneutic as its positive existential condition.” *Being and Time*, p. 163

³² *Being and Time*, p. 158

³³ “Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part in the deficient modes of solicitude, such as And it is precisely these ... deficient and Indifferent modes that characterize every day, average Being-with-one-another. *Being and Time*, p. 158

³⁴ Cfr. *Being and Time*, 161

It is pertinent to examine how far the above-delineated Heideggerian critique of theories of empathy affects Husserl's transcendental theory of empathy, which we saw above in section 1. It is true that Heidegger's criticism is directed against theory of empathy in general, not specifically against Husserl's theory of empathy; he does not mention the name of Husserl or any other thinker in this regard. However, the criticism would hit Husserl's theory if it thought of empathy as the act that first brings about the intersubjective relation. And Husserl's transcendental theory of empathy in fact does think of our intersubjective relation as being first brought about by empathy. To that extent it is hit by Heidegger's criticism.

However, to assess Husserl's theory in a fair manner one should take into consideration the context within which he takes up the problem of intersubjectivity. First of all, this context is defined by Husserl's transcendental viewpoint obtained through the performance of transcendental epoche and reduction. And the necessity of the transcendental viewpoint is dictated by the necessity of beginning philosophy without presupposing any being. From this viewpoint, any objectivity, including the other ego can appear only as constituted by my own transcendental subjectivity. The second element of the context is that Husserl's transcendental theory of empathy occurs as an essential part of his project of accounting for the way in which the world is given to as an "objective world". From the transcendental point of view if the world is presented as having the sense "objective world", it could only be constituted by the transcendental subjectivity. That the world is objective means that it is given to all actual and possible egos as the same world. Therefore, the project of clarifying the sense "objective world" has necessarily to take the route of clarification of how another ego is constituted by my ego.

This would take us to the question of the validity or invalidity of the transcendental viewpoint in philosophy, according to which being cannot be pre-positied before tackling the epistemological question. For

Heidegger such a transcendental viewpoint is invalidated by the fact that the basic condition of Dasein is being-in-the-world, so that it cannot extricate itself from its embeddedness in the world to the lofty heights of a transcendental viewpoint.

But it should be pointed out that the transcendental theory of empathy that describes empathy as an act of analogical apperception is not the only inter-subjective contact that Husserl speaks of. Let us now turn to the examination of these different levels of intersubjectivity that Husserl speaks of.

3. Non-Transcendental Other-Experiences in Husserl

A construal of Husserlian philosophy of intersubjectivity exclusively in terms his transcendental theory of empathy misses out on many other kinds of interesting intersubjective experiences that Husserl studies in his writings. Our normal way of existing and interacting with other subjects is radically different from the inter-modadic communion that comes about in the constitution of “objective world”, which alone is explored in Husserl’s transcendental theory of empathy. The kind of intersubjective community of transcendental ego with other egos constituted by it, is indeed an impoverished kind of communion when compared with the richness and depth of our everyday social life with other subjects. Any philosophy of intersubjectivity that does thematize the intersubjectivity at the level of social life is not worth the name. Fortunately, we have a very copious set of writings of Husserl on this theme. But before going to the examination of Husserl’s phenomenology of sociality, let us look at an anterior layer of intersubjectivity, namely where, we experience ourselves and others as “members of a common human family”.

3.1 The Other as “Man”, A Member of the Community of Humans

The next level of other-experience (the layer coming immediately after transcendental intersubjectivity described in the transcendental theory of empathy), that Husserl speaks of is the level at which I experience the other and myself as members of one human community standing on

equal footing with one another. This way of experiencing the other is radically different from the experiencing of the other from my position as the “universal centre,”³⁵ of all objectivities including the community of other egos constituted at the transcendental level.

In the transcendental sphere the other is given as constituted by me. Therefore, the transcendental world is centred around my primal ego; the other ego is of course *another*, not an extension of me- he is given only through apperception, not through inner perception. All the same, he is constituted by my transcendental subjectivity as the other; the world is an objective world, and therefore the same for all actual and possible egos, but it is constituted by my ego as the same to all egos. In contrast, in the second layer of intersubjectivity my subjectivity loses its central position. I am just one member of a community of equals.

In the transcendental sphere other ego has the sense of being for the primal ego, for the former is constituted by the latter; but the sense is not mutual, that is, the primal ego is not for the other for it is the constituting centre of the other; even when my ego apperceives the other ego as constituting a world of his own it is I who constitute him as constituting his world. But the givenness of the other as man is the result of the discovery that just as he is an object of apperception to me, so too I am an object of apperception to him. “... I arrive at the apprehension of man ... in so far as I comprehend them as centres not only for the rest of the surrounding world, but also for my Body, which is for them an object of surrounding world.”³⁶

The discovery of the other as to whom I am given as his other is also crucial for my understanding of myself as “man” and for the apprehension of the other and I constituting a “we”. Husserl writes,

³⁵ CM p. 129

³⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch. Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*. Husserliana 4, (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), 242

The comprehensive representation others have, or can have, of me is of service to me as regards the apprehension of myself as a social ‘man,’ hence the apprehension of myself totally different from the way I grasp myself in direct inspection. By means of this apprehension, with its complicated structure, I fit myself into the family of man, or, rather, I create the constitutive possibility for the unity of this ‘family.’ It is only now that I am, in the proper sense, an Ego over against another and can then say ‘we.’³⁷

In this ‘mutual being for one another’ we experience all egos, (my own ego included) as having equal status in the community of human beings. As Husserl puts it, there is an “objectivating equalization of my existence with that of all others.”³⁸

At this level of intersubjective experience our “being mutually there for one another in the surrounding world” means “being physically, bodily there”. Moreover, we experience one another as seeing the same objects ... in the same world, which is a world for us”. But this common seeing is only an inauthentic experience, the empty understanding of others and their experiential situation.”³⁹

3.2 Experiencing the Other in Sociality

Though communalization (*Gemeinschaftlichung*) takes place on the previous two levels, it is at the third level that “communalization proper”⁴⁰ takes place. At the first level of intersubjectivity, which is the transcendental level my Ego occupies the place of a “universal center” in so far as the other, though given to me as a center of his own world, is constituted as a centre of his world by me. At the second level there is a reciprocity and equality among all members of the human community in so far as each one is for the other; but in the third level genuine “social

³⁷ Ibid 242

³⁸ CM p. 129

³⁹ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 328-29

⁴⁰ CM p. 132

communalization” takes place through “communicative acts.”⁴¹ since communicative acts bring about social communion, they are also called social acts⁴²; they are also called acts of “personal communication” since what is communicated is not a mere information, but the persons themselves, the I and you.

As the intersubjective experience at this level is brought about through act of personal communication, in order to appreciate the specificity of the intersubjective experience of this level, we should examine Husserl’s account of communicative acts. According to Husserl a mere transfer of a piece of information from one subject to another does not yet constitute an act of personal communication. For example, I may utter a sentence aloud and someone who overhears it might understand what is meant by my sentence. Here a piece of information has been transferred from me to the other, and yet according to Husserl there is no personal communication here. We can speak of personal communication only where a communion or a community between two persons is established through a communication. In our present example, though an information has been transferred from me to the other, my intention to communicate with him is absent; nor is there a comprehension of me as someone who wishes to communicate by the other. As Husserl says, “What is still missing is the intention and will to make manifest (*Kundgebung*)”. An act of personal communication takes place when I utter something with an intention of communicating with another person and the other understands me as someone who wants to communicate with him and show that understanding through some appropriate bodily posturing through which I understand him as having understood me as someone who wants to communicate with him. In other words, in acts of communication,

[m]y wish to communicate ... reaches into the appresented other, by

⁴¹ “Sociality is constituted by specifically social, communicative acts ...”, *Ideas II* p. 204

⁴² Social acts are described as acts “by means of which all human personal communication is established”. CM p. 132

virtue of the other carrying out the activity of appropriation, of engaged listening which evinces itself for me in the understanding of the other as a listener, evinces itself on the basis of the outward posturing of the other which ‘expresses’ the act of listening in the first sense.⁴³

Thus, in an act of communication that brings about a communion the following structural elements are present. (i) I address someone with an intention of communicating with him; (ii) I am understood by the other as someone who wishes to communicate with him; (iii) The other reacts appropriately to my wish to communicate with him by listening intently etc.; (iv) on account of his appropriate reactions to my wish to communicate with him I understand that my intention to communicate has been received by him.

In another passage Husserl gives the following description of communicative or social acts. They are,

... acts in which the Ego is conscious of these others as ones toward which it is turning, and ones which, furthermore, understand this turning, perhaps adjust their behaviour to it and reciprocate by turning toward that Ego in acts of agreement of disagreement etc.⁴⁴

The result of such communicative acts is that they bring about an I-you coincidence (*Ich-Du Deckung*). Husserl writes, “In the I-you-community the I as the I of the specific acts and I as the I of specific correlative acts are connected, both I’s are in an I-coincidence just like a double-I ...”⁴⁵

While at the previous level of intersubjectivity the other and his experiential situation was given only emptily or inauthentically⁴⁶, at the present level of communalization I become “vitality one with the other person in intuitive understanding of his experiencing his life-situation,

⁴³ Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjectivität II*, Husserliana XIV (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 475

⁴⁴ *Ideas II* p. 204

⁴⁵ Hua. XIV, p. 476

⁴⁶ “For the most part, as regards this common seeing, this is inauthentic experience, the empty understanding of the others and their experiential situation”. *Crisis* pp. 328-29

his activity etc.”⁴⁷ At this level of communalization we talk with one another, share their concerns and strivings, are bound to them in friendship and enmity, love and hate.⁴⁸

On the basis of a general socialization made possible by such “social acts”, there arise more intimate and closely knit communities, as family, village community, the state, etc. Husserl calls such communities as “spiritual objectivities of a peculiar kind”; and such “spiritual objectivities stand in a hierarchical order with regard to integration and unity, the apex position in this hierarchy being occupied by what Husserl calls “personalities of higher order. Husserl writes:

With communalization proper, social communalization, there become constituted within the Objective world, as spiritual Objectivities of a peculiar kind, the various types of social communities with their possible hierarchical order-, among them the pre-eminent types that have the character of “personalities of higher order”⁴⁹

In all such personal unities of higher order the integration between the subjects is such that one can speak of different subjectivities “coalescing into a social subjectivity”.⁵⁰

Having examined in this section Husserl’s account of two non-transcendental other-experiences, let us briefly point out in the next section that Husserl’s writings show an awareness of the pre-thematic kind of intersubjectivity that Heidegger studied in great detail.

4. Pre-Thematic Intersubjectivity in Husserl

As we have briefly mentioned above in Section 2, according to Heidegger, already in Dasein’s circumspective dealings with the entities in his environment, in which their tool-character shows itself references to other Daseins are made. Husserl too is aware of this level of pre-

⁴⁷ *Crisis* pp. 328-29

⁴⁸ Cf. *Crisis* pp. 328-29

⁴⁹ CM p. 132

⁵⁰ *Ideas II* p.206

thematic, pre-empathic intersubjectivity. According to Husserl in our very intentional relation to perceptual objects, for instance, others are co-intended, in so far as the sense of the perceptual object implies that it is also an object for others. Objects are not experienced by me as private objects given to me alone; they have a public character. This public character or references to the other is horizonally given to me in my perception of an object. The following passage expresses it.

My experience as mundane experience (that is already each of my perceptions) does not only entail others as mundane objects, but also and constantly in existential co-validity as co-subjects, as co-constituting, and both are inseparably intertwined.⁵¹

Husserl also points out that our embeddedness in a cultural-historical world brings us in contact with other subjects, long dead and gone, not directly and thematically but in our very involvement in cultural activities. For instance, there is a sense in which a philosopher can say that his work is a continuation of Plato's work, that in his philosophical strivings he is united with Plato's strivings and willings. Husserl writes. "My life and the life of Plato become united. I take his life-work forward; the unity of his achievement is a member in the unity of my achievements; his striving, his willing, his formations (*Gestalten*) continue through my work."⁵²

Husserl further suggests that consciousness of the other is implicated in our self-knowledge itself, for I know myself primarily as not as an isolated island, but as living with others. As Husserl says, "... each individual "knows" himself to be living within the horizon of his fellow human beings, with whom he can enter into sometimes actual and sometimes potential contact, as they also can do (as he likewise knows)

⁵¹ Edmund Husserl, Ms. C17 36a, cited by Dan Zahavi in "Beyond Empathy: Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity", *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8 No. 5-7, (2001) p. 156.

⁵² Hua XIV p.198

in actual and potential living together.”⁵³

Conclusion

We have attempted above to show, against a widespread perception of Husserlian phenomenology of intersubjectivity as being concerned exclusively with the transcendental theory of empathy which fails to address our variegated everyday intersubjective experiences, that there indeed exists in Husserl a multilayered account of intersubjectivity that encompasses the entire gamut of our inter-subjective experiences-transcendental, human, personal and pre-thematic. An examination of Heidegger’s critique of theories of empathy has made us aware of some lacuna of such theories. A comprehensive approach to Husserlian phenomenology of intersubjectivity can show the way to developing a philosophy of intersubjectivity that does justice to all its aspects and nuances.

*DePaul Institute of Philosophy & Religion
Bangalore*

⁵³ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970. P.164