

Subjectivity, Intentionality and Intersubjectivity: Essentialistic Phenomenology to Existential Phenomenology

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Historically and logically, there is a close relationship between Western epistemology and the philosophy of subjectivity. Many modern philosophers think that the intrinsic and direct relationship to epistemology is the source of the challenge of Western subjective thought. The empirical ego and the transcendental ego, the I and the other as selves, the absolute givenness of the subject and the possibility of knowing external things are all seen by them as dualistic antitheses between subject and object, mind and body. Focusing on the difficulty of striking a balance between interpersonal relationships and individual autonomy is crucial for the advancement of Western subjective thought. This requires moving away from epistemology and delving deeper into ontology. Thus, prominent philosophers and intellectuals like Sartre, Martin Buber, and Heidegger have attempted to move from the field of epistemology to that of ontology. Heidegger and Sartre emphasize an individual's autonomy while omitting the interhuman. Since Theodor Adorno's main concern was human suffering, particularly the effects of modern societies on the human condition, he made a significant contribution to the understanding of subjectivity in a societal context. Buber highlights the interconnectedness of humankind while dealing with subjectivity.

Subjectivity and Intentionality

Subjectivity is one of the most striking features of human nature. A theory of consciousness must explain how a set of neurobiological processes can give rise to a system's subjective experience of sentience or awareness. The world we can view through our conscious states is always perspectival and filtered through our lens, even though the world itself does not have a point of view. If subjective states of consciousness are real, we ought to look for an objective reason for their existence.

Then, the reality of subjective states of consciousness would be this objective explanation. Studying consciousness naturally leads to the discovery of our conscious states' subjective nature. Thus, the source of the philosophical puzzle surrounding consciousness leads to subjectivity.

Since Intentionality and consciousness are conceptually related, a comprehensive theory of Intentionality must include a description of consciousness. Phenomenologists created an intricate theory of consciousness by focusing on the idea of Intentionality. They explained the characteristics of the conscious acts that are intentional as well as the intentional objects of consciousness that are determined by the content of consciousness. They explained both the subject and the object of consciousness without making any unique claims about the object's existence or actuality. For most philosophers, the ego is an inhabitant of consciousness. Their methods of reduction and *epoche* have served to purify empirical consciousness of all naturalistic and objectivistic interpretations. The phenomenologist considers consciousness to be the constitutive source of all meanings. A candid interpretation of Husserl's theory of Intentionality and the concept of *noema* inevitably makes clear that, without consciousness and the intentional acts of consciousness, there would be no *noema*. Therefore, a phenomenological study of consciousness and its acts is necessary to understand both *noema* and meanings.

In the phenomenological philosophy, consciousness is distinct by Intentionality. By Intentionality, consciousness transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself. Without the permanence of this eternal truth, an absolute unity would be impossible to conceive. Intentionality is not mere directedness to the world but interpretive of the world. It confers meaning on its object so that its object is presented as having a specific meaning for it. In other words, Intentionality is transcendental. It is not an ultimate explanation of the psychic but an initial approach toward overcoming the uncritical application of traditionally defined realities such as the psyche, consciousness,

continuity of lived experience and reason. Intentionality signifies how every act is directed at something directly corresponding to that act. In the experience of any such act, such as judging, thinking, perceiving, loving, expecting, etc, there is the experience of something it is directed to.

Consciousness and Intentionality: Husserl

Husserl's phenomenology investigates the nature of human consciousness to disclose certain unique intuitions that yield necessary truths. Consciousness is the primary datum of all that is given. Without consciousness, the world will not have the significance that it has for us when we reflect on it. Consciousness is the subject of all "making evident", the source of the meaning of evidence as a making present of what is, and hence is the only possible source of any uncertainty; there can be no other source. Thus, Husserl's phenomenology is understood as a science of consciousness. It is a philosophical movement known as phenomenology that begins with an intuitive understanding of phenomena and attempts to extract the fundamental characteristics of experiences and the substance of what we perceive from them. These reflections suggest that phenomenology has a richer understanding of the subjective and the relation between subjectivity and objectivity, whereby objectivity is an achievement or production of subjectivity. Its emphasis on world-constituting consciousness is a powerful antidote to naturalism in all its forms, and it is probably the only philosophy which has attempted to concretely describe the manner of the self-relation of the ego or self and its experience of others in empathy.

Husserl ascribed the idea of Intentionality to Brentano and the Scholastic tradition. However, the radical turn to subjectivity that we associate with Descartes' critique of the Scholastic tradition is responsible for the concept's development in the *Logical Investigations*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and *Ideas* Book-1. It is worth mentioning that Husserl identified a gap in Descartes' cogito, which prevented Cartesian debt

from being excessive. It confirms Husserl's willingness to look into the phenomenon again. As Langsdorf says, "He (Husserl) noticed that thinking need not terminate with a reflectively certain affirmation of the thinker's existence, coupled with reliance upon God's beneficence regarding knowing (albeit indirectly) the thinker's environment. Instead, Husserl noticed that thinking opened out directly and even inevitably to termini other than the thinker's existence. Accordingly, phenomenology was to be the investigation of that other-than, conceptualized in terms of the objects correlative to a (Cartesian) subject's experience". (L. Langsdorf, 2002, 37)

Transcendental phenomenology thus consists of several related enterprises, all of which presuppose that phenomenological reduction has been made. The first involves a descriptive stream of experience or 'phenomena of consciousness' precisely as experienced primordially. Husserl does not consider this to be phenomenology proper. The second enterprise is epistemological, and because it is 'eidetic', it is a part of Husserlian phenomenology. It consists of the analysis of intentional objects to discern the 'essential types' of intentional objects, of which particular ones are instances.

When consciousness is focused on something, it is like light catching whatever it happens to fall upon. It is the ability to show oneself to oneself and to radiate meanings. It is the very nature of human reality to discover itself by discovering the world, to find itself to be there as a watchful witness to itself, to reveal itself by revealing itself in the world. If we can define the exact nexus between consciousness and its experiences and that toward which it is directed, then we may be able to find an answer to the question of why the world is there as it is. Indeed, the Husserlian noesis-noema structure is epistemically favourable. It has an experimental purview, a collegium of meaning grasped as present in time, a solid nucleus around which the meaning-consciousness need not express linguistic behaviour; its manifestation in a language is something contingent and very often directed toward a social purpose.

Constitution: A Comprehensive Analysis

The perennial problem that phenomenology is called upon to solve is: how do we constitute that which constitutes all? How can phenomenology remain faithful to its original programme of pure description if it accepts something which itself is not constituted? There is a paradox of human consciousness. It seems to consist in its ability to transcend itself and remain conscious. Are then the consciousness that transcends and that which transcends two things, or are they just two sides of the same phenomenon?

There is a life of transcendental consciousness in which all meaningful experiences reside. In this 'Erste Philosophie', transcendental subjectivity is regarded as the absolute starting point. On the other hand, Husserl also speaks of the anonymous and pre-personal primal flux of consciousness. Husserl here distinguishes between the empirical I (ego) and the transcendental I (ego). It is only the latter that is given in our transcendental experience. We may take Husserl's transcendental ego as the unconstituted but all-constituting foundation. However, this would eventually lead to an essentialistic phenomenology with presuppositions and pre-conceptions.

Let us turn to a somewhat more detailed analysis of the three contexts of the constitution, namely, the constitution of objects, other subjects and the self. Although we could distinguish these three contexts of the constitution for our analytical purposes, it must be kept in mind that, in reality, all three are interconnected and interrelated. But it is also to be noted that in this nexus of relationships and interdependencies, the problem of the constitution of objects has a specific strategic primacy and importance. Both the self and the other are given as founded realities. In the case of the other, it is one of Husserl's important claims that the other is given by way of an association with the body as a psyche having sway over the body. (Husserl, 1977, (trans.) Dorion Cairns) The transcendental subject is not some other supervenient entity distinct from

the human individual; instead, in Husserl's account of the self, there is a peculiar alliance of unity and difference between the two subjects. The psyche is perceived by us as embodied, existing in a close relationship with the body. We have to differentiate between the idea of the body as a physical object or external thing (*korper*) and the idea of the living body as animated and "ensouled" (*lieb*). As for other realities, such as the socio-cultural and historical, which are offered as "funded realities" and the body as the basis for funding reality, in the phenomenological analysis of 'Constitution', the object usually plays a unique primary role. However, this does not mean that the historical, socio-cultural, and psychic domains can be reduced to the level of physical objectivity. Each domain of objectivity has its constitution and, with it, a unique set of acts that are employed in its presentation. In constitutional analysis, each order of objectivity needs to be described in terms of its noetic-noematic uniqueness. Husserl's various phenomenological descriptions are based on this correlation between the noetic and the noematic. His approach consists of two linked phases or steps that his analysis takes in any given constitutional issue context: In an attempt to illustrate the range of interpretations that this order of objectivity provides, he begins by outlining the structural features of the objectivity domain in question. This turn in his analysis toward the objective dimension can be called the noematic phase. This change provides the basis for the noetic phase, which consists of analyzing the subjective acts and act combinations that enable the kind of objective significance demonstrated on the noematic side. The acts' elusiveness, nuanced nature, and frequent implicit and subliminal associations with intricate and dynamic syntheses make it challenging to characterize them directly. As a result, we have to approach their achievements indirectly; the result of the noetic acts is the presentation of a particular kind of meaning. An analysis of this kind of meaning could clarify the analysis of the acts since the acts have to be such that they can present the kind of meaning provided on the noematic side. Husserl calls this relationship the noetic-noematic correlation between the noetic and the noematic. Because it serves as the regulating

principle for his analysis, and he refers to this principle as the noetic-noematic correlation a priori. We can observe that this a priori tends to teleology since it says that an action or process can best be understood with its outcomes.

However, it is important to exercise caution so that we do not misinterpret this correlational principle from both the noetic and the noematic viewpoints. Constitution does not imply the creation of the object; instead, it should be interpreted semantically rather than ontologically. Another way to put this would be to say that the noema is a meaning or significance as opposed to an object. It is, more precisely, the aspect that one experiences an object through. The resistance to an idealistic or subjectivistic reading of Husserl's writings comes from the capacity to see the connections between noema and meaning. There is probably a similar misinterpretation in the noetic context as well, this time interpreted as a regression or return to psychologism.

In principle, we must distinguish between the objective a priori and the a priori of the life-world. This is accomplished by applying the first *epoche*-bracketing method to all objective sciences, followed by an a priori method to all objective sciences. It offers phenomenologists the realization that the universal a priori of the life-world serves as the foundation for the universal a priori of the objective sciences. According to Husserl, the outside world is neither complete nor detached from meaning. Instead, the life-world receives its meaning and ontic validity from transcendental subjectivity. However, every perspective or understanding of the world is based on the preexisting reality. The world becomes a phenomenon because of the transcendental *epoche*. Therefore, the world is made of transcendental subjectivity. Humankind is the only source of this universal subjectivity and inter-subjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty and the Thesis of Participation

Merleau-Ponty presents the theme of participation, while Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory offers a framework for the interaction between the

human subject and the outside world. According to Merleau-Ponty, there is a participatory and belonging relationship between consciousness and the outside world. I know the world, as he would say in *The Visible and the Invisible*, not because I am a subject or set against the world as an object but rather because I am a part of it. The counterpart to the more firmly Husserlian theme of 'Constitution' is this feeling of being a part of the world. In other words, the philosophical challenge following Kant and Husserl is finding the right balance and relationship between the existentialia and the animalia. Since Kant, we have learned that human consciousness is not just a passive reflection of objects but that it actively participates in the constitution of the world of objects and objective relationships. If the determinations and characterizations that belong to humans as subjects or conscious selves are called Existentialia, the properties and determinations which characterize humans as participating in the life world may be called Animalia.

The primary accomplishment of transcendental philosophy was to demonstrate how the world of objective order and regularity is the result of the abilities of the formative and constitutive capacities of the subject. Within Husserl's phenomenology, this takes the form of the intentional constitution of objects. However, as Merleau-Ponty has emphasized, there is a bond of participation between human consciousness and the world because human consciousness is the consciousness of an embodied living subject. This participatory bond is anterior to Intentionality and explains the possibility of the latter. (Gary Madison, 1981, 23) In these terms, the task is to humanize the transcendental subject as the living embodied subject. Although Husserl's phenomenology contains particular predelineations of this "existential" turn, we need to look to Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur to understand it better. Though it promises to alter the field of phenomenology drastically, the project of humanizing transcendental phenomenology also raises several other serious issues; hence, we may revisit the project's prospects and problems when considering the significance and accomplishments of Husserl's theory of

constitution.

Husserl's analysis of intersubjectivity has been a fertile source of stimulation and irritation to later phenomenologists and others such as Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur, Mikel Dufrenne, Georges Gurvitch, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jurgen Habermas, and Gadamer. Merleau-Ponty is of particular significance here since he focused on a theme in Husserl's analysis, which is central to the *Fifth Meditations* as a whole — namely, the phenomenon of the lived body, with its peculiar kind of self-reference or "reflexivity". As Stephen Priest says, "Merleau-Ponty thinks that the certainty, or the indubitability, of 'I think therefore I am' is due to an immediate and incorrigible self-consciousness each person has, not only of their thought but of their existence. Merleau-Ponty maintains that all thought is self-conscious thought, and all self-conscious thought is consciousness of one's existence. It follows from this that all thought is, at least partly, a consciousness of one's existence. Here is the claim that all thought is self-conscious and a putative justification of it". (Stephen Priest, 1998, 142) Sartre was another remarkable example of a creative response to Husserl in the *Transcendence of the Ego*; he decisively rejected the transcendental ego of phenomenology and also gave a wholly new twist to the theme of the first-order communication of the ego and the Other. Martin Heidegger, too, rejected the transcendental ego and embarked upon a re-examination of the being of the Self as a "being-in-the-world with others". One may feel that Husserl's analysis and explication of intersubjectivity in the *Fifth Meditations* are too weak to support a genuinely "social" conception of the Self; Husserl himself had some misgivings about his efforts in the *Cartesian Meditations* and thus came back to the issue in *The Crisis*. For Husserl, the other ego is an ego, a Self in their own right. Hence, from his point of view, intersubjectivity can be conceived only as a network of intentional subjects. There is no possibility of the merger of these individual subjects in any whole or totality larger than themselves. The backdrop of his analysis is, therefore,

a "Transcendental Community".

According to Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not an independent substance 'locked up' in the human body and 'looking at' the world through the 'windows' of the senses. Consciousness is out of itself along with the world, and this existence of consciousness as 'being - there' in the world is its transcendence beyond itself to disclose the world within itself. The very 'being' of intentional consciousness consists of this transcendence beyond itself towards the world. In this transcendence, not only the being of other entities but also its being about them comes to be revealed. Consciousness is immanent in opposites and contradictions and yet transcendent being untouched by them. Thus, he says, "Consciousness is neither the positing of oneself nor ignorance of oneself. It is not concealed from itself, which means that there is nothing in it that does not in some way announce itself to it, although it does not need to know this explicitly. In Consciousness, appearance is not being but a phenomenon. This new *cogito*, because it is anterior to revealed truth and error, makes both possible." (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 296) The new *cogito* is our being - present - within - the - world. The only indubitable Consciousness is committed Consciousness, which constitutes the very meaning of the term existence.

Intentionality does not distinguish mind from body but defines an area that cuts across the Cartesian distinction. Bodily movement is not intentional in the sense of being purposive or goal-directed, but in the more fundamental sense, being directed towards an object confers a meaning or a value on that object. The relation of consciousness to its body can be defined in terms of 'having' in so far as it is possessed by consciousness, controlled by it to a certain extent, and used as an instrument for the realization of its purposes. The physical condition of our body controls our own conscious decisions or feelings. The relation of consciousness to our body is not one of mere having but one of being, and there is always an inwardly felt sense of identity in our consciousness with our own body. Here, there is a blending of the two aspects - being

and having, identity and difference, in the relation of consciousness to the body as felt by consciousness in its inwardness. The element of 'being' forms the organic base while the aspect of 'having' comes to be derived from it, and the feeling of identity makes a sense of difference possible.

Significance of the Body

The significance of the body concerning consciousness consists in the fact that it is the 'medium' through which consciousness manifests itself and functions in the world, thereby constituting itself as being - in - the - world. Being the concrete medium through which consciousness has its being - - - world, it is integral to the being of consciousness. Because of this integral relation, when consciousness meets with a severe mental crisis, it may lead to a heart - attack or paralysis of the body. Thus, the body constitutes the 'living locus' to the concrete, physical centre from which consciousness seems to spread itself out as disclosing a specific area of the world. Therefore, a sense of identity with the body, to a certain extent, becomes inevitable in consciousness. In the integral relation between the body and consciousness, the two can be distinguished but not divided. It is the kind of unique relation in which the body exists as the conscious body and consciousness exists as the embodied consciousness. In this integral relationship, the body performs an indispensable function with consciousness. The body credits consciousness with exteriority.

Merleau-ponty, in changing the meaning of sensation, understanding, imagination and Intentionality, has flatly rejected the transcendental element of Husserl's phenomenology because it fails to recast knowledge, experience and existence within the natal bond between man and the world. For Merleau-Ponty, the original level of experience, the realm of the primordial perceptual field, is the founding level of experience. Thus, Merleau-Ponty says that "it is through the sense-organs that is through the medium of the body, that consciousness is what

it is." (Sarkar, 1994, 48) Thus, in his view, the body is an original level of Intentionality that gets below the distinction between subject and object, between body and external matter, and between constituting and constituted, thus grounding all human behaviour and all meaning. In the third part of his *Phenomenology of Perception*, he discussed the *cogito*. The sense of '*cogito*' in which Merleau-Ponty is interested is that of a kind of vestigial self-consciousness that accompanies all our actions and thoughts, as well as all our understanding of the significance of the world. This consciousness is inseparable from our body, as it is grounded, as all knowledge is in perception. Merleau-Ponty says that without the body, there is no '*cogito*' at all. For this reason, Husserl's transcendental pure consciousness stands meaningless before Merleau-Ponty.

For Merleau-Ponty, the primary Intentionality is the body's motility and is an ontic relation directed towards the world and not towards an irreal *noema*. For him, all sense experience is intentional. He writes: "Every sensation is already pregnant with a meaning inserted into a configuration, and there is no sense-datum which remains unchanged from illusion to truth." (Bina Gupta, 2002, 20) Merleau-Ponty's idea of bodily subjectivity precedes and accompanies all intellectual understanding of consciousness. The temporality of consciousness never permits consciousness to be presented as a 'now' but always grasped as what is no more, always anticipating what is not yet. He holds that consciousness, if it were wholly absorbed in the object, would cease to be consciousness.

The relationship between humans and the world can only be a constitution and not a participation. But the illusion of an incarnated subjectivity cannot so quickly be dispelled, for life seems to speak more in the accents of sharing and participating, of discovering a meaning already dim. Merleau-Ponty writes, "Analytical (i.e., transcendental) reflections start from our experience of the world and go back to the subject as a condition of possibility distinct from that experience, revealing the all-embracing synthesis as that without which there would

be no world. To this extent, it ceases to remain part of our experience and offers, in place of an account, a reconstruction. It is understandable, because of this, that Husserl, baying accused Kant of adopting a 'faculty psychologism', should have urged, in place of a noetic analysis which bases the world and the synthesizing activity of the subject, his own 'noematic reflection' which remains within the object and instead of begetting it, brings to light its fundamental unity". (Merleau-Ponty, 1984)ⁱ

For Merleau-Ponty, the significance of Husserl's relationship to Kant lies not so much in the more rigorous grounding of transcendental philosophy as an ultimate explication of the meaning of the sciences but precisely in the opposite movement. Its turn towards the life-world; it is this theme of the late Husserl that he finds genuinely inaugurating. He realizes that this movement towards existence and facticity of the lived world co-exists in phenomenology, along with its claim to be a rigorous science. It is these differing tendencies within phenomenology that characterize their ambivalence to the extent that the simple question of what phenomenology is surprisingly turns out to be the most difficult of all. Thus, he pauses the question again: what is Phenomenology? "It may seem strange that this question is still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences, and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences. However, phenomenology is also a philosophy that puts essences back into existence and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than their 'facticity'. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude the better to understand them. However, it is also a philosophy for which the world is always already there before reflection begins — as an inalienable presence. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, vii) ⁱⁱ

It is as a response to this ambiguity and ambivalence in the phenomenological project that Merleau-Ponty in *The Philosopher and His Shadow* says that we must distinguish between the explicit statements of a philosopher and the fundamental light that enabled him to advance those statements. (Merleau-Ponty, 1984) The paradox is that this fundamental light of which, in one sense, the explicit statements are the shadows, is, in another sense, itself in shadow since the philosopher seldom is aware of this himself; it is the unthought thought in his system and to understand him in the most profound sense is to give expression to this thought which in his thinking itself remains unexpressed and silent. And Merleau-Ponty further believed that Husserl's unthought thought was precisely this primacy of being, of the world as already there. As an interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, this may be contestable, for as Gary Madison observes, "Whereas Merleau-Ponty thought he discerned an 'existential philosophy' in Husserl, all the evidence indicates that Husserl never gave up his desire to raise philosophy to the level of an absolute science. If, however, Husserl maintained the notion of philosophy as science, he also necessarily maintained the concepts which flow from this, in particular the notion of transcendental constituting Consciousness. This amounts to saying that Husserl's philosophy remained up until its end of philosophy of consciousness". (Gary, Madison, 1981, 23)

In light of Madison's remarks, we may say that although it is true that in his late writings, Husserl gave a great deal of attention to the notion of nature yet, till the very end, Husserl 'nature' had one or the other of two meanings — either nature as understood by the exact sciences of the Galilean types or as nature in the sense of the pretheoretical life - world. Husserl's primary intention was to show how abstractions and idealizations form the scientific concept of the world based on the life world. This was his excellent response to the reductive tendencies of the age in the form of naturalism or materialism, which claimed to explain man merely as an object in the world of objects. Merleau-Ponty himself

recognizes this as the fundamental drive of Husserl. Describing the drive of phenomenology, he says, "(for Husserl) I am not a 'living creature', nor even a 'man nor again even 'a Consciousness endowed with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in the various products of the natural or historical process — I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents from my physical and social environment; instead, it moves out towards them and sustains them. Scientific points of view according to which my existence is a moment of the world are always both naive and, at the same time, dishonest because they take for granted without explicitly mentioning it; the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me".Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 198)

How could the other be given, not as an object but as a different subject, in my consciousness? How can the other be simultaneously given as constituting and constituted? One needs to be constituted insofar as one is given in my consciousness, but one is also a subject in addition to being a constituted object. From my perspective, one is constituted, but one is also an alter ego within the other's very constitution. I also understand that one sees oneself as a focal point of experience, and that means one has a viewpoint on the world; from their perspective, the world appears distinct and irreplaceable. I, too, seem to be a constituted object in another's life- world. And this, indeed, is the enigma of transcendental intersubjectivity, namely that there is a mutual and reciprocal constitution of subjects.

Transcendental Constitution

The phenomenology of Husserl is a transcendental philosophy that is both continuous and different from the transcendentalism of Kant's critical philosophy. It continues the transcendental tradition insofar as it is also a philosophy under the sign of the Copernican revolution understood as a turn from the objects to the consciousness for which there are

objects at all; it seeks and finds this primacy of consciousness, not merely as a datum but as the ground and presupposition of objective knowledge and experience. The privilege of consciousness is that it is the universal medium of access. Hence, any radical philosophy must begin with the clarification of consciousness not as an isolated and isolating thinking substance as in the Cartesian manner but precisely as access to the world of objects. It must begin with the intentional bond, whereby consciousness is always a consciousness of constitutive character.

Moreover, this Intentionality is synthetic and constitutive; the formations of objectivities of different orders, such as those of physical objects, living things, other subjects, and the world of cultural and historical objectivities, are found in the present moment of intentional acts of consciousness; these orders of experience are made available to us precisely because of these form-giving acts of consciousness. Phenomenology seeks the constitutive capacities of consciousness in perception itself and not merely the categorical dispositions of the understanding as in Kant. Kant seems to have felt that there could be no transcendental deduction at the primary level of sensibility, for the faculty of intuition is receptive and not constitutive; it only provides the content and the occasion for the spontaneity of understanding. But Husserl sees the constitutive character of consciousness in the very ground of perception itself.

However, constituting is done by and for the reason that the body exists and has meaning—it is not an end in itself. This indeed is the principle of transcendental philosophy, that all meaning is meaning for the understanding, for meaning is the result of synthesis, and it is the understanding that is the faculty of synthesis. Under this presupposition, the Copernican revolution in Kant takes shape as a reversal of the order of life. In this naive or natural life, the human subject finds himself as involved in and belonging to the world, which, as it is given in his perceptual life, appears as independent of the subject, as given to it. However, philosophical reflection goes behind this appearance of natural

life and traces the being of the object to the synthetic acts of the understanding itself; these synthetic formations were concealed from natural consciousness, and the result appeared to be independent of reason. But reason had been truly productive; only it had been, as it were, blind to its productivity. Reflection restores sight to this blindness of reason and thereby reveals the object not as being itself but as a being for consciousness. Since the body, including one's own body, is a thing, among other things, the constitutive and synthetic powers cannot be lodged in the body itself but must belong to reason. It is the reason that can deliver the truth about both man and the world, and the fact it declares is that man is essentially a rational subject, and the world has only a being and truth relative to reason. The reason, of course, is not the rationality of an individual animate organism but consciousness understood as the condition of the possibility of the existence of objects. The irresistible thrust of this way of thinking seemed to be towards a radical separation of man as subject from the world as object.

Against the objectivism of the sciences, the fundamental achievement of phenomenology was to show that to be an object is to be a being for a subject and that the very possibility of nature understood scientifically presupposes and is relative to the intentional acts of consciousness. The regress to the life world does not annul this basic orientation, for the theme of the life-world does not displace the theme of 'Constitution' but only gives it a newer task. It is precisely because of this that Husserl could claim in *The Crisis* that the discovery of the life-world is a new mode of access to transcendental phenomenology. While in this sense, phenomenology still runs true to the claims of transcendental philosophy that to be an object is to be an object for a subject. Yet, there is a profound transformation in the concept of objectivity. Husserl's phenomenology is also under the Cartesian sign of a return to subjectivity; indeed, it radicalizes this subjectivity, removing from it all vestiges of thinghood or 'worldliness'. It is in this sense that Husserl describes Kant's conception of philosophy as still worldly. Transcendental subjectivity,

for Husserl, is not a part or piece of the world with a causal or objective relation to it such that the world could be deduced from it. The subject is not part of the world but the ground of it and hence has a dimension of being altogether different from the world; it alone is absolute and irrelative.

The Transcendental Idea of the Subject

Phenomenology carries on the transcendental idea of the subject in certain ways, but it also introduces novel and unparalleled aspects to the study of transcendental subjectivity. Unlike Kant and Husserl, this shift in the understanding of subjectivity could be observed even at the verbal level, particularly in *Crisis*, which discusses transcendental life. More importantly, Husserl is far more concerned with the relationship between psychology and transcendental philosophy than Kant. Husserl observes right away that the very thing that Kant assumed to be true—that psychology can only exist as an objectivistic natural science of the soul—is what has stood in the way of the development of true psychology as a subjectivity-focused discipline. What may have been entirely incomprehensible to Kant, however, was Husserl's idea that true psychology is transcendental psychology. Furthermore, Kant would have seen Husserl's justification for the necessity of this kind of psychology as a direct refutation of the viability of critical philosophy. It is precisely this (i.e., objectivistic) restriction placed upon psychology, which falsifies its meaning, that bears the primary responsibility for the fact that transcendental philosophy found no way out of its uncomfortable situation and was thus caught in the concepts and construction. If psychology had not failed, it would have performed a necessary mediating work for a concrete, working transcendental philosophy, freed from all paradoxes. But psychology failed.(Husserl, 1970, Part III, Sec. 58)..)

Though there is a sense in which the empirical self or consciousness is the same as the transcendental subject, only this identity cannot be

grasped at the empirical level; there are, to some extent, no fundamental differences or departures from the critical philosophy up to this point. What distinguishes Husserl from Kant are the conclusions he makes from this identity. There must be an empirical or mundane co-relation for everything transcendental if the transcendental ego and the human psychological or natural ego are one. Husserl claimed that there was little difference between transcendental phenomenology and psychology, even during *The Ideas*. Husserl argues that true psychology is already a transcendental philosophy. However, in this instance, the nuance is friendlier and more upbeat in *The Crisis* because it provides the appropriate and methodical transition from psychology to the fullness of transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Now, the question is: How could the other be given, not as an object but as a different subject, in my consciousness? How can the other be simultaneously given as constituting and constituted? One needs to be constituted insofar as one is given in my consciousness, but one is also a subject in addition to being a constituted object. From my perspective, one is constituted, but one is also an alter ego within the other's very constitution. I also understand that one sees oneself as a focal point of experience, and that means one has a viewpoint on the world; from their perspective, the world appears distinct and irreplaceable. I, too, seem to be a constituted object in another's life-world. And this, indeed, is the enigma of transcendental intersubjectivity, namely that there is a mutual and reciprocal constitution of subjects. As Merleau-Ponty says, "This subject is no longer alone, is no longer conscious in general or being for itself. He is amid other consciousness, which likewise has a Situation; he is for others because he undergoes any For the first Hegel, militant philosophy reflecting not on subjectivity but on intersubjectivity." (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 134)

When we ask ourselves why this character is necessary for our intentional lives, Merleau-Ponty's explanation makes sense. We need to understand the world only in its profiles on the one hand and its fullness

as an experience on the other because our consciousness is situated, and our subjectivity is embodied. Our incentive lives are, therefore, greatly influenced by our bodies; however, this sense of the body is not that of a simple thing, a physical object, mechanism, or structure. We must distinguish the body as given to us in our immediate perceptual life, in the sense of the living body (*lieb*), from the body in the sense of an external thing (*Korper*). The body that enters into our intentional life and gives it the typical eidetic form that it has is the living body, and it is also that which makes our intersubjective life with other egos possible. If the body is taken in the sense of a physical thing, it will be impossible to recognize another ego behind the body; on the contrary, it is because I have, in my case, an experience of the body as an expression of life, in which my transcendental subjectivity holds sway, as Husserl puts it, that I can recognize the other as a co-subject.

In the above comment on Husserl, we have accentuated it in the spirit of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. However, in his way, Husserl also recognizes what Merleau-Ponty calls the mystery of the incarnated consciousness to be a primal problem for transcendental philosophy. Husserl speaks of the paradox of human subjectivity as consisting of being a subject for the world and, at the same time, being an object in the world. He goes on to describe it by writing, "How can human subjectivity, one of the world's constituent parts, make up the entire world? — Is the idea that people are both objects in their world and subjects to it satisfactory to us? For the philosopher, this juxtaposition of 'subjectivity in the world as object' and 'conscious subject of the world' contains a necessary theoretical question of understanding how this is possible." (Ibid) The problem of human subjectivity as a mode of being in the world is also the fundamental thematic, e.g., Heidegger's early thought. Furthermore, in the context of our concern with Merleau-Ponty, I wish to suggest that, for all his differences, Heidegger's answer is, at least in his first period, comparable to that of Husserl.

In light of these two facets of the problem, the matter at hand becomes

one of the proper relations between the transcendental and naturalistic points of view regarding humans and the world. In other words, the problem arises from the transcendental viewpoint, which holds that nature is ultimately made of consciousness. The naturalistic view holds that consciousness is merely an aspect of the physical universe. To ensure that neither one minimizes the significance of the other, it is crucial to know how to keep the two in balance. Husserl's analysis in *The Crisis* suggests that the development of philosophy in the modern era has involved a long-running struggle between these two points of view. Husserl may have oversimplified the idea when he called transcendental phenomenology the hidden desire of Western philosophy. Although Plato describes a similar struggle and tension between the demands of the ideal forms and the reasonable particulars, he asserts that, like children, we must ask for both. This puts him closer to us than Husserl in his understanding of the fundamental purposes of philosophy. We need to meet both demands because we cannot divide our loyalty and commitments between them. Since Kant, we have learned that knowledge and experience are not merely passive reflections of what is assumed to be given, but rather that we organize our experiences into an objective world with meaningful order through a particular mental process known as spontaneity—perceiving the world as the subject's accomplishment is the requirement of the transcendental orientation. Because of this, Heidegger contends, every philosophy—whether conscious of it or not—must deal with the subject. But that is not where the story ends. Furthermore, people must learn how to communicate and engage with others. Philosophy faces a challenge in trying to understand the mystery of a constituting consciousness that is also a participating life. Merleau-Ponty tried to unravel this mystery for the rest of his life.

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