

Husserl and Intersubjectivity: The Bridge Between the Cartesian and Ontological Way

by

Domenico Cerisano  
Hons. B.A, York University, 2011

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# Supervisory Committee

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## **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh, (Department of Sociology)

## **Supervisor**

Dr. Steve Garlick, (Department of Sociology)

## **Departmental Member**

# Abstract

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Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh, (Department of Sociology)

### Supervisor

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### Departmental Member

This thesis contends that the discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity revealed the inadequacy of Husserl's Cartesian way to the reduction and precipitated the development of the ontological way. Through an analysis drawing primarily from *Ideas I*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and *Crisis*, this thesis will analyze the Cartesian way, intersubjectivity, and finally the ontological way. It will be argued that the Cartesian way focuses on the transcendental ego and ignores the natural world. With the discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity 1) a being beyond the transcendental ego has a role in constituting the world and 2) the objectivity of the world can no longer be reduced to the (individual) transcendental ego. The transition to the historical approach of *Crisis* is analyzed and we find that the Cartesian way cannot address the life-world and transcendental intersubjectivity in their new, central role. It is demonstrated how the ontological way fills this gap.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

*As with much of his work – published and unpublished – Husserl was never quite satisfied with the Logical Investigations; for, in accomplishing that which he set out to do, he moved beyond that which he had done.<sup>1</sup>*

- Philip J. Bossert

For Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, nothing was more important than method. Drawing on Descartes, Husserl questioned the everyday world as the proper foundation for knowledge. Our everyday being in this world leads us to assume that it exists. By bracketing this naive belief we are able to look at the world as an appearance and inquire into the transcendental structures which give the world. It is only from there that we can find apodictic evidence and found all knowledge. Husserl's obsession with method came from the need to 1) describe a new, universal field of inquiry which could be opened up by any researcher and 2) argue that this move to the transcendental was both possible and necessary. The importance of Husserl's method cannot be overstated; it “has been so dominant in Husserl's self-interpretation that talking about it equals discussing Husserl's phenomenology as a whole.”<sup>2</sup>

Husserl called his method the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. It is designed to dislodge us from our belief in the being of the external world, a task that grows in importance

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<sup>1</sup> Philip J. Bossert, Introduction to *Introduction to the Logical Investigations*, by Edmund Husserl, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), xv.

<sup>2</sup> Sebastian Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld in Transcendental Phenomenology*, (USA: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 52.

as rational-scientific thinking becomes more dominant, and to find a new foundation for knowledge in the transcendental ego. In our everyday lives, we do not question that things outside of us exist. When walking we stride forward confident that each step will find the ground because it is an external entity existing independent of us; however, this confidence comes through the assumption that the ground is completely independent of me. We only come to know external entities through sense experience but sense experience is often deceiving or illusory; when placing a stick under water it appears to be curved or when we wake up from dreams believing them so real that if not for waking up, we could not distinguish that experience from reality. There can be no assurance that the external world as given through sense experience exists.

Since we have no guarantee that the ground, the world, or even the self exist, we cannot treat them as a real foundation for knowledge. In the first step of the reduction, or the epoché, we bracket this belief and come to see the world as phenomena. In the second step, the transcendental reduction, we look for the remainder, what cannot be bracketed and must necessarily be. For Husserl this is the transcendental ego, the being which constitutes the world. The reduction brings us from our natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude and finally to the transcendental attitude. In the natural attitude we take the existence of the world for granted. In the phenomenological attitude we understand the world as an appearance. In the transcendental attitude we turn our attention to the conditions of possibility for the appearance of the phenomenal world. Each of these attitudes and the world perceived through them address the same ego and the same world, but each does so in a radically different way.

By opening up the phenomenological field of inquiry through the epoché, Husserl turns his attention from analyzing the external world, as the natural sciences do, to analyzing the world

as an ongoing appearance. How is it that the world can appear? To answer this, Husserl invokes the transcendental reduction and opens up the transcendental field of inquiry. This field consists of the transcendental ego, the being that constitutes the phenomenal world and *must* exist for there to be anything at all, and its cognitions.

The reduction opens up the transcendental field to description but with every phenomenological analysis Husserl saw fit to begin anew. Indeed, most of the books he published in his lifetime are subtitled as an “introduction” to phenomenology. The things that the reduction brings to light affect the reduction itself. This is because every transcendental-phenomenological insight affects how the phenomenologist sees the natural world and the passage from the natural attitude to the phenomenological and transcendental attitude. For example, after taking seriously the results of his early investigation of time consciousness, Husserl distinguished between static and genetic phenomenology. He incorporated every phenomenological structure and description into each new introduction to transcendental phenomenology. Husserl is called the eternal beginner because, as Bossert points out in the epigraph, in each phenomenological study he exceeds what he intended to do. With each new beginning the core of the reduction, the bracketing of the natural world and the realization of the transcendental realm, remains the same, but the *way* to the transcendental changes. A way is not merely the line which connects between two static points. Rather, it is the way itself which delineates the two points marking its beginning and end. A way is a “way of thinking.”<sup>3</sup> We can imagine fighting through a thick forest and suddenly coming to a clearing. There are a near infinite number of ways to reach this clearing, each with their own path and vantage point which emphasizes some features while downplaying others. For Husserl, different ways bring different

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, (USA: Harper Colophon Books, 2011), 3.

things to light, but there is always a scientific sense of growth and refinement. The two points delineated by the way are delineated in progressively more accurate ways and some ways give us a better understanding of the world than others.

In his lifetime Husserl developed three ways to the reduction: the Cartesian, the psychological, and the ontological way. This thesis will focus exclusively on the Cartesian and the ontological ways. These two ways, book-ending Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, offer the most stark comparison of how Husserl's project shifted over the years. The Cartesian way pushes aside the world and jumps to the transcendental ego in one leap, while the ontological way works towards the transcendental through the life-world at a much slower pace. These two different ways of thinking are indicative of Husserl's interests and goals at the time.

The various ways to the reduction are primarily studied in terms of what they are and how they are linked. Bernet et al. focuses on what each way consists of<sup>4</sup>, while Luft interrogates how these various ways fit together in Husserl's larger project.<sup>5</sup> There are no studies of the transition between these ways and what could motivate Husserl to develop a new way to the reduction. This thesis hopes to fill this gap.

One of the defining features of Husserl's later work is the emphasis placed on intersubjectivity.<sup>6</sup> The Other emerges as a unique phenomena and the source of the world's objectivity. Indeed, Husserl finds intersubjectivity has a transcendental dimension as well. Both Bernet et al. and Luft mention the importance of intersubjectivity in the development of the

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<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Bernet and Iso Kern and Eduard Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*, (Hamburg: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 58-87.

<sup>5</sup> Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld*, 52-82.

<sup>6</sup> From Husserl's *Nachlass* we know that intersubjectivity was always an issue for him, but it is only in his later period that he felt comfortable enough to publish work on it.

ontological way. This thesis contends that the discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity revealed the inadequacy of the Cartesian way and precipitated the development of the ontological way. Through an analysis drawing primarily from *Ideas I*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and *The Crisis of The European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, this thesis will analyze the natural attitude and the Cartesian way, transcendental intersubjectivity, and finally the introduction of the life-world and the ontological way. It will be argued that the Cartesian way focuses on the transcendental ego and ignores the natural world. With the discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity two things change: 1) a being beyond the transcendental ego has a role in constituting the world and 2) since the objectivity of the natural world can no longer be reduced to the (individual) transcendental ego, it gains a “thickness” not found in the earlier concept of the natural world. The transition to the historical approach of *Crisis* is analyzed and we find that the Cartesian way is incapable of addressing the life-world and constituting intersubjectivity in their new, central role. It is demonstrated how the ontological way fills this gap.

While this thesis hopes to add to the secondary literature on Husserl by filling in the aforementioned gap, it also makes important contributions to both Sociology and Cultural, Social, and Political Thought (CSPT). Intersubjectivity is foundational to the discipline of sociology. Every study has an implicit concept of intersubjectivity in order for there to exist a concept of society. Husserl was the first philosopher to take seriously the problem of intersubjectivity and by interrogating Husserl's idea of intersubjectivity, as well as how it affected his overall project, we can gain both an understanding of intersubjectivity and an understanding of how a previously subjective thought was impacted by intersubjectivity.

For the field of CSPT, this thesis offers a more robust understanding of the founder of phenomenology. While Husserl is often reduced to his *Ideas I*, this work will take into account multiple works throughout his career and analyze how he dealt with different problems like the life-world and intersubjectivity. Whereas phenomenologists after Husserl believed these problems betrayed the shortcomings of transcendental phenomenology itself and abandoned the project, this thesis will show how Husserl attempted to incorporate these problems into his unique brand of phenomenology.

This thesis will proceed in three sections: 1) The natural attitude and the Cartesian way, 2) transcendental intersubjectivity, 3) *Crisis* and the ontological way. The first section will give an account of the natural attitude, the ideas of judgment and evidence important for Husserl's phenomenological science and how these lead into the Cartesian way to the reduction. The second section will analyze how the Other and the objective world is constituted through intersubjectivity. The relationship between transcendental intersubjectivity and the transcendental ego will be interrogated and we will see how the Cartesian way has difficulty revealing intersubjectivity as a transcendental structure. The final section introduces the new approach in *Crisis* as well as the “thick” and “thin” ideas of the life-world. The life-world is compared to the individually constituted natural world and the intersubjectively constituted objective world to see how they differ. The failures of the Cartesian way are reviewed before introducing the ontological way and demonstrating how it makes intersubjectivity, as a constituting force, more apparent as well as recognizing the importance of the life-world in phenomenology.

## Chapter Two

### The Natural Attitude and the Cartesian Way

In the natural attitude I find directly before me determinate things. For example, the computer I am currently typing on is what is currently present to my intuition. In addition, “Along with the ones now perceived, other actual objects are there for me as determinate, more or less well known, without being themselves perceived or, indeed, present in any other mode of intuition.”<sup>7</sup> For example, I know there is a wall behind me, that there is soil under the grass outside and that there exists a country called the United States of America. This class of objects are called co-present because I know them to exist despite them not being present to my intuition.

However, the world existing for me in the natural attitude is not exhausted by the present and the co-present, it is “penetrated and surrounded by an *obscurely intended to horizon of indeterminate actuality*.”<sup>8</sup> I can inquire into this haze to find something and have “the sphere of determinateness become wider and wider, perhaps so wide that connection is made with the field of actual perception as my *central surroundings*.”<sup>9</sup> For example, I can inquire into the current political situation in Malaysia and possibly even travel there to have this situation before my field of intuition. This indeterminate horizon cannot be exhausted, the “infinite, the misty and never fully determinate horizon is necessarily there.”<sup>10</sup> These three spheres – the present, co-

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<sup>7</sup> Edmund Husserl *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 52. Husserl’s emphasis

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 52. Husserl’s emphasis

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 52. Husserl’s emphasis

present and indeterminate horizon – radiating out from my position like concentric circles, comprise the world of the natural attitude – the natural world.

These three spheres do not comprise a world of mere matter but a “*world of objects with values, a world of goods, a practical world.*”<sup>11</sup> The computer before me is not simply a determinate material entity but has value; it is important to me as I use it to finish this essay. In the same way, other human beings are not walking masses of flesh with some mysterious psychic component but strangers, friends, or enemies.

Since the natural world is a world infused with values, it appears in different ways to people in different situations. For example, a business person may see a rose as a potential two dollar profit, a poet may see it as a symbol of love, and a gardener may see it as the product of hard work. To each of these people the rose is a different thing. It is not a mere object but an object of use or a “functional object.”<sup>12</sup> Functional objects exist within a context in relation to human actors.

The most fundamental feature of the natural attitude is what Husserl calls the “general thesis” of the natural world. In the natural world “I continually find the one spatiotemporal actuality to which I belong like all other human beings who are to be found in it and who are related to it as I am. I find the “’actuality’...as a *factually existent actuality and also accept it as it presents itself to me as factually existing.*”<sup>13</sup> This can be put simply as the “overall intentional presumption or belief that the world exists, is actual, is really there.”<sup>14</sup> The general thesis of the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 53. Husserl’s emphasis

<sup>12</sup> Aron Gurwitsch, *Phenomenology And The Theory Of Science*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 171.

<sup>13</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 57. Husserl’s emphasis

<sup>14</sup> Moran Dermot, “From The Natural Attitude To The Life-World,” in *Husserl’s Ideen*, ed. Lester Embree and Thomas Nenon (Netherlands: Springer Netherlands, 2013), 111.

natural attitude is not a judgment or an evaluation about existence; it is a belief that is continuous in the attitude itself. This continuous belief manifests itself as the “thereness” or “on handedness” of the natural world.

Going about my everyday tasks within the natural attitude I simply believe in the existence of the world and that it exists as it is presented to me. Sitting here typing on my keyboard, the existence of the keys or the letters as they appear on the screen is assumed. I am sure of their existence because they are there before me, “on hand”. The keys and the letters on the screen are part of the one spatiotemporal actuality of which I am part.

The natural attitude is the naïve belief in the existence of the world – our faith that what presents itself to us is what exists. This faith extends from what is present in my intuition to the hazy indeterminate horizon of actuality, creating a single spatiotemporal world comprised of both material determinations and values.

The natural attitude is how we live moment to moment but it cannot be the basis of a science of experience. Our naive grasp of the natural world is devoid of any understanding of how it is we come to experience the world. If phenomenology is the investigation of “what it could mean for something *to be known in itself yet in the context of cognition*,”<sup>15</sup> then we must alter this attitude so that consciousness can become part of our investigation of the world.

### ***Husserl's Search for Science***

Husserl’s goal is to found philosophy as a radically genuine science in order to create the conditions for “mutual study carried on with a consciousness of responsibility, in the spirit that

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<sup>15</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Trans. Lee Hardy, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 23. Husserl’s emphasis.

characterizes serious collaboration and an intention to produce objectively valid results.”<sup>16</sup> In order to find a genuine idea of science we must first understand what it means to judge a state of affairs to be such as they are. We are in search of grounded judgments where the truth or falsity of a judgment would be shown.

A judgment can be immediate or mediate. Immediate judgements are immanent and present at that moment. Mediate judgments, on the other hand, rest on the showing of immediate judgments which the mediate judgment presupposes. Mediate judgments presuppose belief in other judgments. One can always return to an already established grounding and “by virtue of the freedom to reactualize such a truth, with awareness of it as one and the same, it is an abiding acquisition or possession and, as such, is called a *cognition*.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, a cognition is a judgment – in the sense of an awareness of a state of affairs – that is grounded. But what exactly grounds? Judgement always finds its grounding in evidence. Evidence is the state-of-affairs itself being present in a judgement. For Husserl, evidence is not merely a state-of-affairs which point towards a “deeper” truth in the way a falling ball is evidence of the existence of gravity. Evidence is the *phenomena itself* present in the stream of consciousness.

Having a general sense of the evidence he pursues, Husserl begins to think about beginnings, specifically cognitions which are first in themselves and fit to be the ground of a scientific, universal knowledge. The search for cognitions first in themselves naturally leads us to question what constitutes reliable evidence.

In prescientific experience we find evidence that is imperfect. Imperfect evidence is incomplete, one-sided and obscure. It is infected with “*unfulfilled components, with expectant*

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<sup>16</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 10. Husserl’s emphasis.

*and attendant meanings.*”<sup>18</sup> Perfect evidence, which Husserl calls adequate evidence, would be reached through the harmonious synthesis of further experience which would see the attendant meanings fulfilled. For example, when I experience a tree I bring my assumptions about the tree to the experience. I don’t know about the back of the tree, but I assume it is similar to the front I see right now. In order to fulfill this attendant meaning about the back of the tree I can choose to walk around to the back of the tree, making my evidence more adequate. However, it is a question if we can ever “complete” the synthesis of a phenomena, reaching a point when every attendant meaning has been fulfilled. Husserl leaves open the possibility that truly adequate, perfect evidence lies at infinity.

Husserl himself seeks an evidence of a different perfection – apodictic evidence. Adequate evidence does not preclude the possibility that what is evident could become doubtful or illusionary. I may circle around the tree again only to realize that it is a large bush or cell phone tower. Apodictic evidence, on the other hand, is not only certainty of a state-of-affairs but has the character of being “*at the same time the absolute unimaginableness (inconceivability) of their non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as “objectless”, empty.”<sup>19</sup> Since apodictic evidence excludes all doubt it is evidence first in itself. It is important to mention that *apodictic evidence need not be adequate*. Apodictic evidence of the tree would make the non-being of the tree unimaginable so that I could be sure the tree would never suddenly reveal itself as an illusion.

The being of the world appears to be the apodictic evidence we are in search of. After all, how could I deny that this tree sits in front of me or that this apple I am eating is red?

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 15. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 16. Husserl’s emphasis.

Unfortunately, the sensuous experience through which we experience the world simply cannot exclude the possibility of doubt. Again, the tree may reveal itself to be a cell phone tower. At no point in our everyday experience can we feel confident that the non-being of the entity in front of us is inconceivable. This does not mean that the evidence given through experience is to be thrown out, it merely means that we must be attentive to the validity and range of any evidence the senses offer us.

Put in a less technical way, Husserl's project is inspired by Descartes' search for first philosophy - an apodictically true foundation on which we can build true knowledge of the world. The natural attitude itself proves inadequate as this ground since functional objects only exist in relation to particular contexts. Because the natural world is a practical world, things have different values to different people and all of these values are dependent upon the context of the human actor relating to them. Since all knowledge in the natural attitude stems from these practical contexts, this knowledge is not apodictic. Husserl is searching for knowledge which is true for all people in all contexts.

In order to overcome the natural attitude and find a proper ground for first philosophy, Husserl devises a two step methodology: the phenomenological reduction or epoché which brackets the general thesis of the natural attitude and the transcendental reduction which reveals the transcendental ego as the founding source of all phenomena and the proper ground of first philosophy.

The epoché is the method by which we "put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude."<sup>20</sup> This entails recognizing the previously

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<sup>20</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 61.

unthematic faith in the existence of the natural world and bracketing this belief. Once bracketed, the world appears to us in an entirely different light. It becomes obvious that the world around me is not merely a world that *is*, but a world that is *perceived*. The ground I trust to provide support as I walk forward is only known through my senses; it only exists insofar as it is given to me in my experience. The world is transformed from a spatio-temporal reality to a series of appearances.

It is important to recognize that *the natural world does not disappear in the epoché*. Indeed, since consciousness is always consciousness *of*, it would make no sense to speak of a consciousness without a world. The world continues to persist; the general thesis is merely put out of use. Even within the epoché, the natural world “will always remain there according to consciousness as an “actuality” even if we choose to parenthesize it.”<sup>21</sup> What is being bracketed and put aside is not the appearance of the natural world itself but the general thesis.

After the epoché, the world becomes phenomena and I can enact the transcendental reduction to become aware of the transcendental conditions for the existence of the phenomenal world before me. If the epoché brackets belief in the general thesis, the transcendental reduction looks at the remainder. What cannot be bracketed? What necessarily must exist? For Husserl the transcendental reduction reveals the transcendental ego, “the pure ego, with the pure stream of my *cogitations*,”<sup>22</sup> as the grounding for the world; I become aware of myself “as Ego, and with my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire objective world exists for me and is

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 21. Husserl’s emphasis.

precisely as it is for me.”<sup>23</sup> This pure ego is the transcendental ego. This being is unique because, unlike trees or apples, I cannot doubt its existence.

The transcendental ego cannot be doubted because it is the entity through which the world is constituted. Through the transcendental reduction I recognize my consciousness as the condition of possibility for the experience of the natural world: “consciousness is no longer viewed as a part of a worldly ‘whole’; instead, it is viewed as a ‘whole’ of which the world is part.”<sup>24</sup> The structure of our experience of objects, for example that objects are given in adumbrations through time, is this transcendental ego. It is not a “tag end of the world” as it is in Descartes. For Descartes the ego remains part of the world it experiences but for Husserl the transcendental ego, as that which constitutes the world, is necessarily outside the world.

However, this transcendental ego is not simply a structure. Included within the transcendental ego are its cognitions. The transcendental, as the sphere of pure evidence, includes “the *whole world* – only now I refrain from judging whether it exists and consider it solely as experienced.”<sup>25</sup>

The transcendental ego can serve as the field of Husserl’s first philosophy because it is the world’s point of origin. The natural world necessarily presupposes a subject while the subject does not presuppose the natural world.<sup>26</sup> Husserl goes as far as to say “*that the Being of consciousness, of every stream of experience generally, though it would indeed be inevitably*

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Russell Matheson, *Husserl: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006) , 71.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

<sup>26</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 48.

*modified by a nullifying of the thing-world, would not be affected thereby in its own proper existence.*<sup>27</sup>

The transcendental-phenomenological reduction brings us from the naive belief in the existence of the natural world as the proper grounding for knowledge to the transcendental ego and its cognitions. The transcendental ego will serve as the basis of Husserl's eidetic science:

Thus the being of the pure ego and his cogitationes, as a being that is prior in itself, is antecedent to the natural being of the world – the world of which I always speak, the one of which I *can* speak. Natural being is a realm whose existential status is necessary; it continually presupposes the realm of transcendental being. The fundamental phenomenological method of transcendental epoché, because it leads back to the realm, is called transcendental-phenomenological reduction.<sup>28</sup>

Having found this sphere of pure evidence it would seem that Husserl's methodology is complete and the greater task of describing this transcendental realm is before him. While this is in part true, Husserl never stopped revisiting his methodology. Understanding the transcendental also gives us further insight into the construction of the natural world. The more the connection between the transcendental and the natural world is elucidated, the more Husserl is compelled to revisit the path or way he takes from the natural world to the transcendental sphere. In the same way, each time a hiker goes up a mountain she will take certain paths or avoid certain areas through the knowledge she gained on previous hikes. If the transcendental conditions for the appearance of the world determine the "being" of the natural world, then a greater grasp of those transcendental conditions can help us bring the transcendental into view with more depth and clarity when we proceed to it from the natural attitude. We will see that Husserl's investigation of intersubjectivity on a transcendental level precipitates a re-conceptualization of the way to the transcendental. This is the shift from the Cartesian way to the ontological way.

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<sup>27</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 151. Husserl's emphasis

<sup>28</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 21. Husserl's emphasis

## Chapter Three

# Transcendental Intersubjectivity

The problem of Other minds is one that has only recently occupied philosophy. In the Continental tradition it was Husserl who first took it up in order to defend his transcendental phenomenology from the charge of solipsism.

It is not hard to see why Husserl had to defend his work from the charge of solipsism. Through the transcendental reduction Husserl has discovered the transcendental ego, a being whose existence is prior to that of the world. The world is always a world *for* the transcendental ego, since any perception is intended by the transcendental ego. If we perceive other persons in the world, does this mean that they only exist for a transcendental ego? Husserl's guiding question is "*How* can my ego, within his peculiar ownness, constitute under the name, 'experience of something other', precisely something *other* – something, that is, with a sense that excludes the constituted from the concrete make-up of the sense-constituting I-myself, as somehow the latter's analogue?"<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note the peculiar character of Husserl's defence against solipsism here. Husserl undertakes a transcendental analysis of the Other, meaning that the Other appears as a phenomenon for my ego. Husserl is not seeking to secure the objective (worldly) existence of another as one would in the objective sciences or other empirical investigations. The question is

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 94. Husserl's emphasis.

how Others are constituted within my transcendental ego, not whether or not I can prove the existence of other egos.

One might assume that Husserl's phenomenology is inherently solipsistic because it begins with the transcendental ego, but this would be doing an injustice to Husserl.

Transcendent phenomena are *always beyond me but still mine*:

This "transcendence" is part of the intrinsic sense of anything worldly, despite the fact that anything worldly necessarily acquires all the sense determining it, along with its existential status, exclusively from my experiencing, my objectivating, thinking, valuing, or doing, at particular times – notably the status of an evidently valid being is one it can acquire only from my own evidences, my grounding acts.<sup>30</sup>

To investigate the constitution of the Other through the transcendental ego is not to take a solipsistic approach but merely an epistemological one. To know something is to possess it as it exceeds you. The Other as phenomena is mine, but this phenomena also points beyond me.

### ***The Other and Objectivity***

Subjects are a unique problem because in addition to being physical things, beings *in* the world, they are also (supposedly) transcendental egos constituting the world, or beings *for* the world. Husserl must now deal with how the phenomena of the alter ego is given while maintaining that "The world is for me absolutely nothing else but the world existing for and accepted by me in such a conscious *cogito*.<sup>31</sup>"

The natural world we experience is not private but intersubjective and accessible to everyone. For example, if I see a flower and want to show it to someone else I merely point at it. I assume that the flower itself is there for the other person as much as it is there for me. In

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 26

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

addition to the mere physical existence of the flower, the “spiritual” predicates attached to the physical existence direct us towards others. For example, I may believe this flower to be beautiful and this beauty to be there for others as well, but this definition of beauty is also a cultural accomplishment that points towards the larger culture of which I am part.

This unremarkable experience raises an interesting problem for phenomenology. How can a common experience exist when the flower and its beauty arises from my own intentional life? How can there be a shared, objective world if my transcendental ego constitutes every sensation and idea? How can the same phenomena exist for different transcendental egos? With these questions the problem of intersubjectivity now touches on the existence of the objective world. In order to understand how the phenomena “flower” is communally available we must understand the transcendental structures governing community. If we are asking how the Other is given to me as Other, we must ask the same about the intersubjectively available world the Other and myself share. Beginning to understand how Others appear to me we have come to the problem of how the world itself can have an objective existence.

The objective sense of the world is now in question after realizing that it includes others who are also in question. In order to answer the question of the transcendental constitution of Others we cannot simply remain in the transcendental realm which contains elements of Others. In order to answer the question of intersubjectivity we must “purify” the transcendental realm so that we may begin from a completely non-alien foundation.

### ***The Sphere of Ownness***

To accomplish this, Husserl proposes the abstractive reduction to the transcendental sphere of ownness by disregarding “*all constitutional effects of intentionality related*

*immediately or mediately to other subjectivity* and delimit first of all the total nexus of that actual and potential intentionality in which the ego constitutes *within himself a peculiar ownness*.<sup>32</sup>

This sphere of ownness is an “*essential structure, which is part of the all-embracing constitution* in which the transcendental ego, as constituting an Objective world, lives his life.”<sup>33</sup> Let us see what Husserl means by this.

Husserl first defines the sphere of ownness in negative terms, saying that it is precisely that which is non-alien. The abstractive reduction to the sphere of ownness, already taking place within the transcendental attitude, brackets everything that is alien. For Husserl this means bracketing ego-like living beings as well as a particular sense of phenomenon which refer to Others. For example, my determination “son” must be bracketed because it refers to a biological mother and father. Everything “other-spiritual”, as that which gives the Other its specific sense, must also be bracketed. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we bracket “the characteristic of being there for and accessible to everyone, of being capable of mattering or not mattering to each in his living and striving.”<sup>34</sup> Phenomena cease to be verifiable by others, they become exclusively my own.

As always, the point of a reduction is to find what remains outside the brackets, what cannot be held in abeyance. Bracketing all these elements reveal to us “*a unitarily coherent stratum of the phenomenon world*, a stratum of the phenomenon that is the correlate of continuously harmonious, continuing world-experience.”<sup>35</sup> Through this stratum we can continue with our experiencing intuition despite no longer accepting the experience of anything

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 93. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 93. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 96. Husserl’s emphasis.

immediately or mediately alien. In addition, Husserl claims that this is the founding stratum. I cannot have experience of the alien or an objective world without this stratum of experience<sup>36</sup>.

This sphere of ownness is “the ‘*Nature*’ included in my ownness.”<sup>37</sup> Included in this is my animate organism, my body as “the sole Object within my abstract world-stratum to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe *fields of sensation*...the only Object ‘in’ which I ‘*rule and govern*’ immediately, governing particularly in each of its ‘organs’.”<sup>38</sup> This body is distinguished from others in that it is the sole body I “use” to perceive and the sole body I can “control”.

In addition to my body Husserl identifies two more aspects of the sphere of ownness: the actual and potential stream of subjective processes as well as the intentional objects of that subjective process as “immanent transcendence”. We analyze these properties below.

Firstly, when I am within the transcendental reduction and reflect as the transcendental ego, I find, through perception, the “‘I am’ and its abiding identity with itself in the continuous unitary synthesis of original self-experience.”<sup>39</sup> I am sitting here typing, the same I that woke up feeling tired this morning. This identity, constituted by the transcendental ego, is given as “an open infinite horizon of still undiscovered *internal features of my own*.”<sup>40</sup> Both the actualities and potentialities of my stream of subjective processes belong to my sphere of ownness, constituted without anything that could be called Other or alien. Not only does the sphere of ownness include subjective processes, it also constitutes the intentional objects that are constituted in those processes. Husserl qualifies this by saying that the constituted unity is

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<sup>36</sup> This founding is not genetic, as will be discussed later.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 96. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 97. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 101. Husserl’s emphasis.

“*inseparable from the original constitution itself*, with the inseparableness that characterizes an immediate *concrete* oneness, not only the constitutive perceiving but also the perceived existent belong to my concrete very-ownness.”<sup>41</sup>

### ***Digression on Husserl's Sense of the Sphere of Ownness***

The sphere of ownness is a controversial subject in the secondary literature. For Zahavi the sphere of ownness is a primordial transcendence to be distinguished from the transcendence constituted in transcendental intersubjectivity.<sup>42</sup> For Sheets-Johnstone, on the other hand, this “mineness” is not an element of experience but a theoretical element used to separate the I from Others in order to account for intersubjectivity.<sup>43</sup> I will argue that the sphere of ownness is a real stratum of experience that does not found in the sense of genetic development but as a “parentage of sense”.

We do not perform a reduction to the sphere of ownness in the same way we reduce to the transcendental ego. When we reduce we hold certain phenomena in abeyance in order to find the remainder – what cannot be reduced. If we were to find the sphere of ownness in this way it would imply that the sphere of ownness is a strata of the transcendental ego which constitutes the world prior to anything alien. But this statement is nonsense. Is not the world, as the constitution of the transcendental ego, an alien entity? In what sense could we constitute an alien entity without that entity’s alienness?

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 104. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>42</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity: A Response to the Linguistic-Pragmatic Critique* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 32.

<sup>43</sup> Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, “Essential clarifications of ‘self-affection’ and Husserl’s ‘sphere of ownness’: First steps toward a pure phenomenology of human nature,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 382.

Instead, we find that Husserl has a unique but poorly explained term for the method of the reduction to the sphere of ownness – an abstractive epoché. Indeed, he calls this a “*peculiar kind of epoché*.”<sup>44</sup> The uniqueness of this epoché is reinforced throughout this section when Husserl uses the verb “abstract” to describe the performing of this method instead of “bracket”. How are we to make sense of this abstractive epoché and the sphere of ownness it discovers?

It will help us to review the “regular” epoché. Through the epoché and transcendental reduction we bracket the general thesis of the natural attitude and find the transcendental ego which constitutes the world. The transcendental ego is prior to the mundane ego, the ego of the natural attitude, since it is only through the transcendental constitution of the world that there is a world to accept. The transcendental ego and mundane ego are not different egos, they are the same ego accessed in different ways (one through naïve everydayness and the other through the transcendental reduction).

In the abstractive epoché, on the other hand, we begin already within the transcendental ego – the very basis for anything worldly. We cannot go “beyond” or access this ego in a way that is any more fundamental, so it would be silly to propose the sphere of ownness as a fundamental level “beneath” the transcendental ego. Instead, as a discovery of the abstractive epoché already within the transcendental realm, we must understand the sphere of ownness as an *abstractum*. For Husserl an *abstractum* is an “object in relation to which there is some whole of which it is a moment or non-independent part.”<sup>45</sup> This means that while the sphere of ownness is not independent of the phenomenal world, it can still be distinguished from it and considered on its own.

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<sup>44</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 93. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>45</sup> John J. Drummond, *Historical Dictionary of Husserl’s Philosophy*, (USA: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 33.

This is what Ricoeur means when he says the sphere of ownness is not a question of temporal genesis but of “parentage of sense.”<sup>46</sup> In the “regular” epoché we trace a lineage of temporal genesis (the transcendental ego constituting the world prior to the mundane ego experiencing the world), but in the abstractive epoché we discover a *parentage* of sense. This parentage of sense points out that the only way the alien can have any sense for us at first is through the self. Husserl says as much when he clarifies what he means by the sphere of ownness as a founding stratum:

This unitary stratum, furthermore, is distinguished by being essentially the *founding* stratum – that is to say: I obviously cannot have the ‘alien’ or ‘other’ as experience and therefore cannot have the sense ‘Objective world’ as an experiential sense, without having this stratum in actual experience; whereas the reverse is not the case.<sup>47</sup>

The sphere of ownness founds the *sense of the alien* and not the alien itself. Thus, there is no transcendental world devoid of alienness that opens up onto the alien; there is only the *abstractum* of the sphere of ownness that initially grants the alien sense.

Returning from this brief tangent, we finally have Husserl’s definition of the sphere of ownness: it is both the actualities and potentialities of the stream of consciousness (the structure which constitutes) as well as the intentional object as immanent transcendence; the constituted in a restricted sense. From this founding sphere Husserl will ask how we come to perceive anything alien and how, from this alien presence, the objective world is constituted through transcendental intersubjectivity.

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 119.

<sup>47</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 96.

## *Experience of the Other*

Husserl moves forward by inquiring into the problem of how the ego comes to have “intentionalities with an existence-sense whereby *he wholly transcends his own being*.”<sup>48</sup> Let us consider the experience of another person. When I encounter an Other within my sphere of ownness, I find that what is directly given to me is merely a physical thing - a body. I find no immediate evidence of a stream of consciousness in the body before me. This inability to directly and immediately constitute the Other within my sphere of ownness is important for Husserl. If I had direct access to the alter ego then “it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same.”<sup>49</sup> The perception of the Other requires a *mediacy of intentionality* which extends beyond my ownness. In this mediacy the Other is not given originally in the way that the body in front of me is, but is instead made co-present in an appresentation – a non-original absent present.

The alter ego is to be understood in the negative sense “not I”. Within my transcendental perception I am “governing immediately in my animate organism (the only animate organism) and producing effects immediately in the surrounding world...”<sup>50</sup> When an Other enters my transcendental perception I am immediately given another animate organism within my ownness as an imminent transcendency. Since I am given another animate organism despite my body being the only animate organism, the other animate organism must have

derived this sense by an *apperceptive transfer from my animate organism*, and done so in a manner that excludes an actually direct, and hence primordial, showing of the predicates belonging to an animate organism specifically, a showing of them in perception proper. It is clear from the very beginning that only a similarity connecting within my primordial

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<sup>48</sup> Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 105. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 110.

sphere, that body over there with my body can serve as the motivational basis for the “*analogizing*” *apperception* of that body as another animate organism.”<sup>51</sup>

Put in another way, we are always already aware of other human beings through the transcendental function of analogizing *apperception* which transfers the sense of my animate organism to the body over there.

This analogizing transfer of sense is common in everyday life. Every perception points back to a prior primal instituting. I do not rediscover the sense of “pencil” with each new pencil I use, I understand this pencil as “like” the pencil I used in the past through an analogizing *apperception*. I can become attentive to this pencil and find that it is longer or a different colour from previous pencils, but this differentiation can only be made on the basis of the analogizing transfer of sense. This shows us that analogizing *apperception* is not a reduction of the Other to self, but is instead the first step towards recognizing a genuine Other.

But we cannot compare pencils to transcendental egos. What makes the analogizing transfer of sense unique for alter egos is that “*the primally institutive original is always livingly present*, and the primal instituting itself is therefore always going on in a livingly effective manner.”<sup>52</sup> While I can only analogize the primally instituted pencil from memory, my primally instituted animate body is constantly present to me. Therefore while the pencil has been primally instituted in the past, my animate body is continually primally instituted from moment to moment<sup>53</sup>.

Appresentation is involved in all perception since I can only ever see from the here and the now. The immediate evidence of the front of an object appresents the back and hurls me

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 111. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 112. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>53</sup> Again, following Ricoeur, this primal institution should be understood as a “parentage of sense” and not a temporal genesis.

into the future with a “direction” that would allow me to fulfill the evidence that was only mediate (appresented). Looking at the front of the tree I can walk around it to make present what before was only co-present, but this is not to say the tree can be completely fulfilled or exhausted by our perception. With each present adumbration there is always a new appresentation – there is a new back with every front.

Husserl is at pains to emphasize that “apperception is not an inference, not a thinking act.”<sup>54</sup> I do not reason that I exist in three dimensional space and since the tree has a front I can safely assume that it has sides and a back. Rather, it is *within the perception “front of the tree” that the sides and back are apperceived*. The sides and back are, therefore, always already present in their absence.<sup>55</sup>

Applying this to intersubjectivity we can say the alter ego is an apperception given in the perception of the Other body, but it is unique. The appresentation of an Other’s original sphere can never be fulfilled. This fundamentally alters the sense in which an Other is perceived. In the apperception of the tree, the mediate evidence of the back is given *through* the immediate evidence of the front – the absence is always given through presence. I can move towards these apperceptions to fulfill them by moving around the tree and perceiving what was once the back. Within the transcendently reduced world only the body of the Other is present to me. The alter ego, on the other hand, can never be present and therefore cannot be apperceived in the same way as the back of the tree. The alter ego can only ever be known mediately through the body

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>55</sup> Applying this to the analogizing apperception we are tempted to say that the other animate organism, since it is apperceived as an animate organism through the presence of my animate organism, is always already present as part of my animate organism. Husserl does not pursue this, although we do see a similar conclusion in transcendental intersubjectivity.

and can never be immediate. It is because the alter ego always outruns me that it can never be part of my sphere of ownness.

We are now aware of the two ways in which analogizing apperception of the alter ego differs from the analogizing apperception of non-egoic phenomena: 1) my animate organism is constantly present and therefore constantly being primarily instituted and 2) the alter ego is appresented and never itself present; it cannot be fulfilled in perception. The next step in the constitution of the Other, pairing, is intimately connected to the first of these differences.

Pairing is “a *primal form of that passive synthesis* which we designate as ‘*association*’, in contrast to passive synthesis of ‘*identification*’.”<sup>56</sup> In pairing association “two data are given intuitionally...as data appearing with mutual distinctness, they *found phenomenologically a unity of similarity* and thus are always constituted precisely as a pair.”<sup>57</sup> In this pairing there is an overlaying of sense of each with the Other and “there takes place in the paired data a mutual transfer of sense – that is to say: an apperception of each according to the sense of the other, so far as moments of sense actualized in what is experienced do not annul this transfer, with the consciousness of ‘*different*’.”<sup>58</sup> Upon entering into a relation of pairing with another animate organism I do not understand the alter ego as a bundle of properties to be explicated but as a “likeness” that not only allows me to constitute the Other but also to *constitute my own animate organism through their likeness*. Thus, at least in some sense, I understand myself through the Other.

For example, I am free to explore my body’s potential. I can test my pain tolerance; see how far my arm can bend or how fast I can run. In this way I come to constitute my body and its

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 112. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 112. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

capabilities. But I also constitute my body through Others like me. If, after having accomplished an appresentative transfer of sense to another body, I see that body doing a cartwheel, I immediately recognize this as a potential of my own animate organism. I may lack the athleticism to accomplish this feat, but I understand my body as capable of it. This co-constitution, however, does not exist in all intentional relationships. When I see a tree sway in the wind or a cheetah sprinting to catch a gazelle I do not feel that I am capable of these actions in the same way. There can be no appresentative transfer of sense in these cases because the in/animate body before me does not allow for a pairing in the same way a humanoid body does.

A problem arises from my inability to primally constitute the alter ego: if there occurs a transfer of sense in pairing, the psychic component of the animate organism can never be present and therefore cannot be fulfilled in a primal presence, how is an animate organism distinguished from a non-animate organism? If the presence of the alter ego isn't primordially present why don't I simply dismiss the phenomena of Other as an illusion?

Another animate organism is given through an analogizing apperception which transfers the sense of my animate organism to that body over there. At the same time the psychic component of the animate organism is appresented through the animate body it "governs". To be given an animate organism necessarily implies a psychic world, these are given together as "*a unitary transcending experience.*"<sup>59</sup> While I do not have direct access to the psychic realm of the Other, I do have direct access to the animate organism as a unitary transcending experience and the continuous fulfilling of the appresented horizons of the animate organism. I can verify the body in front of me through "*new appresentations that proceed in a synthetically harmonious fashion, and only by virtue of the manner in which these appresentations owe their existence-*

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 114. Husserl's emphasis.

*value to their motivational connexion with the changing presentations proper, within my ownness, that continually appertain to them.*"<sup>60</sup> It is through the continually harmonious behaviour of the physical side an animate organism which indicates a psychic side appresentatively that I can verify the existence of an animate organism. Should I experience something discordant about its behaviour it becomes positive evidence for the alter ego's non-being. For example, out of the corner of my eye I may see a body coming towards me, but looking towards it I find that it is merely the silhouette of a hanging coat.

"Harmonious behaviour" seems to be very vague, but it is something that comes to us intuitively. When I bump into someone while walking I am concerned with my physical body but I also immediately intuit the animate body which I have bumped into and will ask "Are you okay?". On the other hand, when I walk into a tree I feel no impulse to ask the tree if it has been hurt. I may inspect the tree to see if I have damaged it, but it is a relation of identification and not association. In egoic phenomena there is an element of a psychic component "governing" over the physical and expressing itself in the world. The tree's physical existence is harmonious in that it is patterned, but it is the animate body's ability to *harmoniously unite unpatterned behavior through the unity of the psychic* which distinguishes between animate and non-animate organisms. Animate organisms can chase a ball and stop to look at the sky before running in a circle for five minutes. There is no identifiable pattern here, but we apperceive a psychic element which unites these apparently unrelated behaviours. Husserl's distinction here also paves the way for understanding a multitude of animate organisms including both humans and animals. What determines the animate organism is not a certain quality of psychic content, but the apperception of some kind of psychic existence.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 114. Husserl's emphasis.

## *Distinction Between I and Other*

We also recognize that the harmonious actions of the animate organism in front of me is not me. This helps us understand Husserl's fundamental distinction between ownness and Other:

Whatever can become presented, and evidently verified, *originally* – is something *I* am; or else it belongs to me as peculiarly my own. Whatever, by virtue thereof, is experienced in that founded manner which characterizes a primordially unfulfillable experience – an experience that does not give something itself originally but that consistently verifies something indicated – is 'other'.<sup>61</sup>

Since the Other is unfulfillable and originates in my ownness, the Other is an intentional modification of my own ego. Through this intentional modification the ego of the animate organism in front of me is apperceived analogically along with his own primal world.

Also important in distinguishing between I and Other is the animate body's place in physical space. My animate body is the "zero point", my constant "here", and in this "here" I have corresponding spatial modes of appearance; I can perceive this computer and the table it is on but I cannot see what is happening outside. When I am "here" I have the freedom to move and change my "here" to "there" which will become a new "here". When I see another animate organism, I see it as a "there", a potential "here" for me. I can imagine that the corresponding spatial modes of appearance "there" are the same as my spatial modes of appearance "here", save for the different position in (phenomenologically constituted<sup>62</sup>) space.

Let us apply this to the alter ego. Through associative pairing I see another animate organism "there" in my sphere of ownness. I do not apperceive them as another "I" possessing

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 114/5. Husserl's emphasis.

<sup>62</sup> For Husserl space is constituted throughout my change in orientations. When I move my head forward the objects on the peripheries of my field of vision disappear while the objects directly in front of me appear closer. It is in this motion that I constitute my sense of space, and not an objective field in which objects exist prior to the transcendental ego (this is an epistemological claim, not an ontological one). The copious amount of quotation marks in this paragraph are meant to distinguish the here and there of scientific space with the "here" and "there" of phenomenological space.

the exact same spatial modes of appearance intended before them. Put another way, I do not transfer my sense of “here” to the animate organism “there”. Instead, I apperceive that the animate organism “there” has its own spatial modes of appearance corresponding to its position.

### ***The Constitution of the Objective World***

Earlier we noted that the question of intersubjectivity is not only a question of the Other but the objective world itself. It has been explained how I come to have the sense of an Other, but this does not explain how the Other and I come to share a world. The term objective here is used in a specialized sense. Husserl is not speaking of a world beyond subjective experience as in a scientifically objective judgment. Instead, Husserl uses the term objective to mean a phenomena available to a community, something that can be experienced together.

Indeed, how a shared world can emerge is itself mysterious. What motivates the sense of there being something external to my phenomenal experience? Where do I get the sense that the objects of my experience exceed the finite experience in which I come to know them? Having understood how I become aware of another ego we can now move on to how a plurality of egos is constituted.

The first objective phenomena is the body of the Other. This is because the body of the Other is the first phenomena that I understand as being experienced from multiple perspectives. Through pairing I realize that the body of the Other is governed by an ego in the same way that I govern my body. The Other's body before me does not only exist for me but is also constituted by the Other ego which governs in it. When I tell someone there is some food on their cheek two spheres of ownness intersect: my sphere which spots the food on the Other's body and the

Other's sphere which recognizes the body I point to as their own. In the Other's body a community begins to grow.

This newly formed community constitutes the commonness of Nature, which serves as “the *foundation for all other intersubjectively common things.*”<sup>63</sup> This commonness is implicit in my pairing with another, it is the commonness of our Nature that allows for co-constitution. This primordial Nature is recognized as identical to my own but in the mode “there”. For example, let us suppose someone points off in the distance and says to me, “Look at the bird!” However, when I follow the direction of their finger I only see a large house in front of me. At this point I do not respond “You are lying, there is only a house!” but say “There is a house blocking my view!” and rush over to where my friend is to see the bird that was blocked by the house.

I recognize that my “here” is but one possible “here” and in moving myself “there”, I can perceive what another ego already in the mode “there” can see by virtue of our shared Nature. For Husserl this Nature includes, but is not limited to, synthetic systems and modes of appearance. If there was no shared Nature then I may assume that my friend had mistaken a house for a bird, since I wouldn't be able to recognize his “there” as a possible “here” for me.

A possible critique of this common Nature is that people from two different cultures, when perceiving the same thing, may disagree on what they are seeing. Despite this, in order for there to be a disagreement there must be something common to disagree on. I must recognize that what I understand as a sparrow and what my friend understands as a blue bird must be present to both of us in order for there to be a disagreement. It is our common Nature that furnishes the possibility of our disagreement. We must imagine that, if bats could speak,

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 120. Husserl's emphasis.

disagreement between bats and humans would be impossible because there would be no common ground on which disagreement could take place. We cannot fathom perception through echolocation. The bat's perception would be unintelligible to us and vice-versa. Thus, any pairing includes the givenness of the alter ego's identical Nature.<sup>64</sup>

It is through being given the Nature of the Other ego as identical that the objective world can exist at all. It is because I can say the Other ego is looking at the same world through the same Nature that I can speak of an objective world or have any possibility of verification.

Realizing that the Other ego does not merely constitute its body but also the world around it through our similar Nature, we begin to form an objective world. For example, I realize that the ground I see the body standing on must also be constituted by the Other within their sphere of ownness. From this first objective phenomena a community between two spheres of ownness is formed and an objective world begins to develop between them.

If we probe deeper we reach the transcendental co-relate of this community in transcendental intersubjectivity. In transcendental intersubjectivity we find that not only does the alter ego have a Nature and world but she constitutes Others for herself as well. My body, like the Other's, must be an object of the other ego. This is another important moment because by realizing myself as both perceiving and perceived, both constituting a world and being an object for another, my position in the world becomes relativized. I am no longer the zero point in *my* world but merely a part of world that exceeds me.

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<sup>64</sup> We note that pairing occurs in degrees, so that empathy is still possible with non-human egos. It is only assuming that the Nature of "batness" is given in the bat itself, and "empathized" with to a degree, that we can say a bat would be unintelligible to us and vice-versa. The example is meant to illustrate how disagreement assumes an underlying unity at the transcendental level.

This mutual perception and interpenetration forms the fundamental stratum of transcendental intersubjectivity. Even when I find myself alone I am still a member of a community and a part of the transcendental intersubjectivity that links us all.<sup>65</sup> The community of monads which constitutes is called transcendental intersubjectivity. This community is the *functional community of one perception*. It is in this functional community that the Objective world is constituted.

### ***Transcendental Intersubjectivity and the Transcendental Ego***

Before moving on we must clarify the relationship between transcendental intersubjectivity and the transcendental ego. Understanding this is central to understanding Husserl's shift to the ontological way.

For Smith transcendental intersubjectivity is the worldly accomplishment of a transcendental ego. He quotes Husserl and argues that in order to be affected by anything external I must first have a sense and this sense is always constituted through a transcendental ego:

Since others are only thinkable thanks to the sense of another that is constituted only in empathy, and since empathy involves a body and entails objectivization, transcendental intercommunion can take place *only in a world*. Transcendental intersubjectivity 'spatializes, temporalizes, realizes itself (psychophysically, and in particular in human beings) within the world'.<sup>66</sup>

The transcendental ego, therefore, is genetically prior to transcendental intersubjectivity. There must already be a world for transcendental intersubjectivity to exist.

I would argue that Husserl, on the other hand, is not so eager to separate the

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

<sup>66</sup> A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, (Cornwall: Routledge, 2003), 234. Smith's emphasis.

transcendental ego and intersubjectivity. Reviewing the metaphysical<sup>67</sup> results of the fifth meditation he says “A priori, my ego, given to me apodictically – the only thing I can posit in absolute apodicticity as existing – can be a world-experiencing ego only by being in communion with others like himself.”<sup>68</sup> For Husserl in order to *have a world at all*, a transcendental ego must already be in communion with Others. This communion with Others that exists prior to any world is transcendental intersubjectivity.

In addition, the second part of Smith's statement above quotes Husserl saying that transcendental intersubjectivity realizes itself within the world, but this doesn't seem to be Husserl's intention. In the Cairns translation this section reads “This involves being a plurality of monads that constitutes in itself an Objective world and that spatializes, temporalizes, realizes itself – psychophysically and, in particular, as human beings – within that world.”<sup>69</sup> A plurality of monads first constitutes an objective world and only then can realize itself in the world. By only quoting the latter section, Smith ignores the constitution of that world by transcendental intersubjectivity.

The transcendental ego, as revealed by the Cartesian way, appears isolated from alter egos and treats them as a unique class of phenomena. However, by the end of the fifth meditation, it seems as though this transcendental ego is not independent but can only constitute the world as a member of a functional community of one perception. The transcendental field is no longer limited to a single mind but becomes transcendental (inter)subjectivity.

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<sup>67</sup> Husserl does not use the term metaphysical in the traditional sense. Metaphysical philosophy has been bracketed through the epoché.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

Here we seem to be at an impasse. For Husserl, transcendental intersubjectivity is primary in the sense that it is necessary for the transcendental ego to have a world but at the same time, he wants to maintain the primacy of the transcendental ego as the most fundamental field of research. How are we to make sense of this?

Zahavi tells us that “When [Husserl] speaks about the absolute priority of the ego, this does not contradict his reflections concerning transcendental intersubjectivity as the absolute field of being.”<sup>70</sup> The primal transcendental ego I am holds a unique position within transcendental intersubjectivity because it is through this ego that I am self-aware. There can be no doubt that my consciousness is my primary access to the world. We saw that by beginning from an isolated transcendental ego, discovered by bracketing the natural attitude through the Cartesian way, Husserl discovered transcendental intersubjectivity. The “radical *self*-reflection necessarily leads to the discovery of absolute intersubjectivity.”<sup>71</sup> Husserl never understood his discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity as a break with transcendental subjectivity, instead he saw the two as complimentary. Transcendental subjectivity has a necessarily intersubjective structure.

Thus we might say that Smith was not incorrect, he merely did not take into account the *a priori* side of transcendental intersubjectivity. Both are present in Cartesian Meditations and both inform how Husserl's project shifted in his unfinished work Crisis. Transcendental intersubjectivity refers to both an open community of monads constituted within my transcendental ego and an *a priori* intersubjective intentionality through which my world is given.

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<sup>70</sup> Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 123.

<sup>71</sup> Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 121. Zahavi's emphasis.

Husserl begins from the transcendental ego and discovers transcendental intersubjectivity. This discovery alters the sense of the transcendental ego he began with. Husserl's analysis folds back on itself and forces a shift in its very foundation.

### ***The Intersubjective Shift and the Shortcomings of the Cartesian Way***

Let's take a moment to review how, through the Cartesian way to the reduction, we arrived at transcendental intersubjectivity. We first suspended our belief in the being of the natural world and found the transcendental ego which remained. Beginning with the transcendental ego we enacted the abstractive epoché to find the sphere of ownness, where I gain a sense of myself and my world independent of anything alien. This sense is then transferred to the Other's body through pairing. The Other's body then becomes the first objective thing as I realize that it is constituted by two separate transcendental egos. Objectivity thus stems from intersubjectivity. Husserl ultimately posits transcendental intersubjectivity as the structure which constitutes the objective world.

If transcendental intersubjectivity was only something constituted in the transcendental ego, Husserl's phenomenological project would have been left untouched. Intersubjectivity would simply be something that exists as it has sense for me and is ultimately reducible to the transcendental ego. Thus, the Cartesian way which emphasizes the transcendental ego would remain an adequate method. However, transcendental intersubjectivity is not merely a constituted entity, it also functions in an a priori capacity.

It is precisely this metaphysical discovery, that transcendental intersubjectivity functions in an a priori capacity, which disturbs the ground of Husserl's work and motivates the search for

a new way to the reduction. As an a priori structure of the transcendental ego, transcendental intersubjectivity changes the natural world in which every phenomenological exploration begins.

We saw earlier in the Cartesian way to the reduction that the natural world was merely a product of the transcendental ego viewed from the natural attitude. It only served to block our way to the transcendental field of investigation. After the discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity, the natural world becomes the objective world – a world not only intersubjectively perceived but *intersubjectively constituted*.<sup>72</sup> The objective world is still a product of the transcendental ego in the sense that it is only through the transcendental ego that I have access to a world, but the objective world now exceeds my transcendental ego. The transcendental ego furnishes the sense that the world is constituted by something beyond me, similar to how it furnishes the sense that the alter ego exists but is beyond me.

The Cartesian way to the reduction cannot account for the intersubjective constitution of the world because it accesses the transcendental by reducing the natural world to the phenomena of an isolated ego. It obscures the way in which these phenomena exist for my transcendental ego both as an “I” and an “I” among a “We”. These gaps make it a less effective way to the transcendental.

Indeed, by leaping to the transcendental ego, the Cartesian way “brings this ego into view as apparently empty of content.”<sup>73</sup> If the transcendental ego comes into view without an objective world there are no phenomena appearing with more than one possible perspective. These co-constituted phenomena are the main clues to the a priori sense of transcendental

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<sup>72</sup> It could be argued that the objectivity of the natural world is what is constituted intersubjectively and it is inaccurate to separate the two concepts, but I choose to separate them to demonstrate how each concept denotes different ideas of the transcendental ego and its constitution of the world from different phases in Husserl's thinking.

<sup>73</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 155.

intersubjectivity. Every perceptual object points not only to myself but Others as well: “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.”<sup>74</sup>

In order to develop a way to the reduction which brings transcendental subjectivity into relief as both constituting and constituted, Husserl will find a way to the transcendental through the objective world constituted by transcendental (inter)subjectivity. This will put issues like history and intersubjectivity at the forefront of his final, uncompleted work *The Crisis of The European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*.

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<sup>74</sup> Husserl quoted in Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 119.

## Chapter Four

### Crisis and the Ontological Way

Husserl's final and unfinished work, *Crisis*, is a radically different approach to transcendental phenomenology. Whereas previous introductions to phenomenology began with an explanation of transcendental phenomenological method devoid of any historical consideration, Husserl's new teleological-historical approach asks that we “*reflect back*, in a thorough *historical* and *critical* fashion, in order to provide, *before all decisions*, for a radical self-understanding.”<sup>75</sup> Distinctions between judgments and evidence are replaced by warnings of a crisis and rather grand arguments for the teleological necessity of transcendental phenomenology. Indeed, Husserl tells us that through historical considerations it will “become apparent that all philosophy of the past, though unbeknown to itself, was inwardly oriented toward this new sense of philosophy.”<sup>76</sup>

But how are we to make sense of this new critical, historical reflection? What place can it have in transcendental phenomenology? For some this new direction means a break from transcendental thought in general. Husserl is often quoted saying “Philosophy as Science, as serious, rigorous, nay apodictically rigorous Science - this dream is over.”<sup>77</sup> This quote leads

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<sup>75</sup> Husserl, *Crisis*, 17. Husserl's emphasis.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Husserl quoted in Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Phenomenological Movement,” in *Phenomenology, Critical Concepts in Philosophy*, volume 5, ed. Dermot Moran and Lester E. Embree (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), p.26.

thinkers like Merleau-Ponty to claim that in the new approach of *Crisis* Husserl has abandoned his previous search for apodicticity.<sup>78</sup>

But no matter how radical this new beginning may be, it is not a renunciation of his previous work. Husserl still believes in the apodictic and has hope for philosophy as science. The above quote does not refer to Husserl's own system, but the fate of his system within modern Europe, dominated as it was by the forgetting of the life-world and human sciences in the vein of Dilthey<sup>79</sup>. *Crisis* is not Husserl picking up the pieces of a broken dream but an attempt to recover the dream from historicism and existentialism.

Instead of abandoning his previous work, Husserl's concept of history attempts to deal with history within his transcendental project. Carr describes Husserl's account of history as "trying to avoid the sceptical implications of historicism and *Weltanschauung-philosophie* while according considerable legitimacy to their notion of the socially and historically conditioned character of consciousness."<sup>80</sup> That is to say that Husserl wants to incorporate history without making it the ultimate horizon of human existence. To do this Husserl understands history in an eidetic sense, as "an essential trait of consciousness as such: its character of being laden in its relation to the world with preconceptions derived from its social milieu."<sup>81</sup>

If history is made into an essential feature of consciousness and history is necessarily a *social* relation to the world, then intersubjectivity must be at the heart of Husserl's new approach. This becomes clear in Husserl's new concept of the life-world which is constituted by transcendental intersubjectivity and, in addition to being the world we live in day to day, serves

<sup>78</sup> Helmut R. Wagner, "Husserl and Historicism," *Social Research* 39 (4) (1972): 704.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 705.

<sup>80</sup> David Carr, Translator's Introduction to *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, by Edmund Husserl (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), xxxvii.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, xxxvi.

as the fertile ground which allows us to have worlds. The life-world is built upon the concept of the objective world introduced in *Cartesian Meditations*.

### ***The Life-World***

In *Crisis* the life-world is introduced as precisely what the natural-scientific world of the natural sciences lack. Galileo sought to overcome the subjective realm of perception through mathematization. All concrete, actual entities are reduced to idealities and assumed to belong to a universal, mathematical causality. Even “secondary qualities” which could not be quantified, such as sound or colour, are mathematized indirectly by assuming that these qualities have a material basis – for example, the tone of the strings on a guitar changing depending on length and thickness. This leads us to mathematical formulas that can not only describe the entity, but predict how it would behave in any given set of circumstances. The natural sciences become “free, systematic, a priori thinking completely liberated from all intuited actuality, about numbers, numerical relations, numerical laws.”<sup>82</sup>

The natural sciences seek an a priori structure that would allow prediction to extend to infinity, the true nature of the world that exists beyond experience. Husserl recognizes that all practical life involves “prediction”, stating that “Seeing, perceiving, is essentially having-something-itself and at the same time having-something-in-advance, meaning-something-in-advance.”<sup>83</sup> But if these rough predictions are a part of the structure of our being, then what is the problem with extending and refining them through natural science?

What makes natural-scientific mathematization a problem, what constitutes the crisis of the European sciences, is that it forgets and then replaces the life-world. In extending prediction

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<sup>82</sup> Husserl, *Crisis*, 44.

<sup>83</sup> Husserl, *Crisis*, 51.

to infinity, the natural sciences do not win this knowledge for a particular project but for the objective world as such. We end up measuring the life-world

for a well-fitting *garb of ideas*, that of the so-called objectively scientific truths... It is through the garb of ideas that we take for *true being* what is actually a *method* – a method which is designed for the purpose of progressively improving, *in infinitum*, through “scientific” predictions, those rough predictions which are the only ones originally possible within the sphere of what is actually experienced and experienceable in the life-world.<sup>84</sup>

In measuring the life-world for a “garb of ideas” it is buried. Rather than living a historical, cultural world constituted intersubjectively, everywhere we see only an objective world independent of consciousness.

Scientific method, tools, and products slowly begin to *replace* the world they seek to investigate. To take the example of bouncing a ball, it becomes problematic when my lived experience of my arm in motion is replaced by an assemblage of bone, muscle and sinew. It becomes problematic when the ball itself and the way it moves as phenomena are replaced with the mediate evidence of an a priori, non-directly observable truth of the world; for example gravity, force and resistance. Indeed, the goal of natural-scientific investigation is to *overcome the flow of phenomena and discover the unobservable, universal laws governing them*. Natural science is predicated on leaping over the life-world as it is given to us and focusing on the “true” quantifiable, mathematical world that lies beyond perception. We can see the effects of gravity, but we do not perceive gravity itself. Natural-science is a methodology that purports to show us the true world that our perception hides from us.

Put in more positive terms, the life-world is “the world that is constantly pregiven, valid constantly and in advance as existing, but not valid because of some purpose of investigation,

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<sup>84</sup> Husserl, *Crisis*, 51. Husserl’s emphasis.

according to some universal end.”<sup>85</sup> Every scientific investigation begins within a world of sense. It is in this world that experiments are carried out, observations are made, and theories are constructed. This pre-scientific world that is mined for scientific truths is the life-world.

### ***Thick vs. Thin Life-World***

Husserl's idea of the life-world is hardly simple and straightforward. In addition to being prior to science, Husserl distinguishes between the life-world as a cultural world common to communities and a perceptual world common to humanity as a whole. Indeed, Carr, the translator of *Crisis*, argues that the term is deployed in two different senses – the cultural and the perceptual.<sup>86</sup> Agreeing with Carr, Russell calls these two senses the “thick” and “thin” life-world respectively.<sup>87</sup>

The thick life-world is the “entire world given to us in immediate experience replete with cultural richness, manifold practical meanings and sensuous fullness.”<sup>88</sup> This is the practical, intersubjective world of everyday experience immersed in history. In comparison to the natural world or objective world, which Husserl talks about as constituted phenomena, the thick life-world emphasizes the lived-in character of the world. It is not merely the world I find before me, it is the world where I live my projects and find myself moved by various motivations. Different thick life-worlds are cultural accomplishments existing simultaneously. For example, the life-world of a poor person living in India is different and exists alongside the life-world I

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<sup>85</sup> Edmund Husserl, “The Life-World and the World of Science” in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr, 379-384, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 383.

<sup>86</sup> David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1980), 134-162.

<sup>87</sup> Russell, *Husserl: A Guide*, 194.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 194.

experience. In this sense there are multiple life-worlds with unique histories and cultural accomplishments.

The thin life-world also belongs to the intersubjective world of experience but does not vary from culture to culture. Instead, the thin life-world is the condition of possibility for any specific, concrete life-world. It is because of the thin life-world common to the poor Indian person and myself that we can share a common experience. We may understand this experience in radically different, even irreconcilable, ways, but the conditions for this disagreement are furnished by the thin life-world common to us both. Paraphrasing Husserl, Russell says this level of the life-world is where “we find the plenum of sensuous givenness out of which the idealizations of the natural sciences can legitimately arise”<sup>89</sup>. We can think of this as the ground out of which different thick life-worlds emerge. The thick life-world is where I find the keyboard in front of me as an important tool for me to continue to research and write. The thin life-world is the structure of the manners of givenness which give the keyboard to both the poor Indian person and myself.

While these are two very different senses of the life-world, they are not unrelated. Dodd brings these two concepts together in the following quote:

the first acquisition of the world, the first encounter with the world as something open to being meaningful, occurs within the accomplishments of encountering the world of things in doxic modalities that represent a “grasp” of the givenness of the world in its openness to its further articulation, in the sense in which a belief is open to being verified, validated, clarified.<sup>90</sup>

The first acquisition of the world is the thick life-world. It is there we encounter the world as something meaningful, but this is always a meaning specific to a particular community. Along

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 194.

<sup>90</sup> James Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 153.

with this specific meaning we also experience the world in its openness to further articulation. This openness is the experience of the thin life-world which is *given alongside* the thick life-world. For example, for me the laptop in front of me is the tool I use to finish this MA thesis. If I choose to reflect further, I can understand the laptop in another sense – in its openness to understanding through different thick life-worlds. I can imagine that the same laptop could be a magical device to the ancient Greeks. This laptop which is the foundation for all of these concrete meanings is the laptop in the thin life-world

While both of these life-worlds are given alongside one another, for the purposes of this thesis we will focus on the thin life-world as the open world constituted through transcendental intersubjectivity which furnishes my transcendental ego's determinate world. The thin life-world is a more radical concept and demonstrates how Husserl was forced to develop the ontological way to the reduction. To make this thesis easier to read from this point onwards I will use the term “life-world” to denote the thin lifeworld.

### ***Differences Between the Life-world and the Natural World***

While both of these concepts seem similar at first, they differ in important ways. We will discuss how they occupy different places within phenomenological method. We will see that the emphasis on the life-world in *Crisis* emerges from Husserl's own shift from the world as the product of a transcendental ego and the world as a product of transcendental intersubjectivity. In doing this we will understand the life-world better as well as see how transcendental intersubjectivity has affected his larger project.

Firstly, both concepts have very different roles in Husserl's method. The natural world is the correlate of the natural attitude. It is the everyday world we know ourselves to be in whose

existence is taken for granted. Through the epoché we bracket the existence of this world and open up the phenomenological realm and ultimately, the transcendental realm. It is something imposed upon us which needs to be held in abeyance and is not distinguished from the scientific world. My experience of time through intuition and my experience of time as an objective reality independent of me are both part of the natural world.

The life-world, on the other hand, is hidden. The natural scientific world, constructed through scientific truths, threatens to hide the life-world from view. In this way we live in the life-world, but we are not aware of it. We must become aware of the life-world by holding scientific truths in abeyance. The life-world informs whatever instantiation of the natural world would exist at the time. There can be many different worlds I exist in or may exist in, but all of these worlds emerge from the life-world.

This is a new direction for Husserl. In the Cartesian way the natural world was a blockage to be broken through on the way to the true matter of philosophy – the transcendental. I concern myself with the natural world only to become conscious of the general thesis of the natural attitude and bracket it. It is telling that Husserl's discussions of the natural world are usually a few pages in length and serve to introduce the epoché

The life-world, instead of something to merely be bracketed on the way to the transcendental, emerges not only as something that needs to be discovered but also an important field of investigation. Indeed, the majority of *Crisis* is devoted to understanding and fleshing out this new concept. It is not something to be overcome but something to be interrogated and understood.

### ***The Life-World and The Objective World***

How did this shift from the natural world to the life-world occur? How is it that in the Cartesian way we bracket the natural world while in *Crisis* we become interested in the life-world? Why does the constituted world become something of interest for Husserl?

I argue that it is through the constitution of the objective world and the discovery of transcendental intersubjectivity that the concept of the life-world emerged in Husserl's later work. It is through transcendental intersubjectivity that the world becomes something to interrogate and not something to overcome because I am not solely responsible for the constitution of the world.

In the Cartesian way it was perfectly valid to bracket the natural world because it was reducible to the transcendental ego. The natural world is constituted by the transcendental ego and possesses no structure outside of this constitution. This is evident in how Husserl believes it possible to hold the belief in the being of this world in abeyance at will. Entirely contingent, the natural world cannot furnish the kind of universal knowledge Husserl seeks.

After Cartesian Meditations, when the natural world is understood as an objective world constituted in transcendental intersubjectivity, it is not as easy to reduce the objective world to the transcendental ego. Within transcendental intersubjectivity I am humbled; what I perceive is not the singular truth but a perspective among many. I realize this when I recognize my body not only as the zero point of my orientation unto the world but as an object for the other.

The fact that my perspective is one among many also affects how I understand the world around me. I can only see an object in adumbrations but I know that the Other, occupying a different physical space than my body, sees the same object through different adumbrations. The

object is co-constituted between the two of us. In this way, both the object and the world it exists in are not a product of a solitary transcendental ego but the functional community of one perception – transcendental intersubjectivity. In this functional community and the world it constitutes my transcendental ego holds a privileged place<sup>91</sup>, but it is merely a part of a larger whole. A subtle transition occurs here that shifts the importance of the transcendental ego in Husserl's work. The transcendental ego is no longer the thing that constitutes the world, it is the thing which participates in the constitution in the world through which the world is given to me.

This transition affects not only the role of the transcendental ego but the role of the natural world. The natural world has always been an objective world but it is only after *Cartesian Meditations* that the constitution of objectivity is explained through transcendental intersubjectivity. Now the objective world is constituted in transcendental intersubjectivity but given in my transcendental ego. For this reason it is no longer reducible to the transcendental ego.

Since the transcendental ego is no longer responsible for the objectivity of the world, the world appears as something different to us. It comes into view as something beyond me, a worldly ground which gives the questions we try to answer. It cannot be reduced to an inert, always already constituted phenomena. Like a teacher asking a question, the world carries us forward. Here we can see the beginnings of the concept of the life-world.

Through transcendental intersubjectivity, the life-world emerges as an important structure to understand, but any attempt to analyze either of these concepts is frustrated by the Cartesian way which focuses solely on the transcendental ego.

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<sup>91</sup> It is only through my ego that anything can have sense for me

### *Inadequacies of Cartesian Way*

These new structures put a strain on the Cartesian way to the reduction. The Cartesian way is carried out through (attempted) systematic doubt. We suspend our belief in the world to find what cannot be suspended – the transcendental ego.

There can be no doubt that this way of accessing the transcendental brings transcendental intersubjectivity into view since it is the method used in *Cartesian Meditations*. Despite this, as a way to the transcendental it is clumsy and does more to hide the fundamental structure of intersubjectivity than reveal it.

The transcendental ego, as revealed by the Cartesian way, appears independent of other egos. This is why Husserl's investigation of intersubjectivity begins with understanding the Other as appearance and some commentators, like Smith, only understand Husserl's intersubjectivity as constituted and not constituting. Indeed, to get a sense of the transcendental ego as always already a part of an a priori transcendental intersubjectivity it is necessary for Husserl's analysis to fold back on itself and reinterpret the transcendental ego it began with. The discovery of a priori transcendental intersubjectivity is almost an auto-critique of the transcendental ego. Auto-critique seems to be the only way of understanding a priori transcendental intersubjectivity when we begin from a seemingly solipsistic transcendental ego.

The life-world, on the other hand, is not merely obscured but altogether ignored. The world is merely an impediment to the transcendental ego, a constituted thing whose contingency is to be recognized and surpassed. There is no sense of a worldly structure which would serve as the soil for thought and reflection.

It is because of these shortcomings that Husserl develops a new way to the transcendental. This method, which Husserl calls the ontological way, will first uncover the life-world and ultimately realize the transcendental *through* the life-world and not in spite of it.

### ***How the Ontological Way Brings Intersubjectivity Into View***

The ontological way<sup>92</sup> begins with the epoché of all objective knowledge of the world, including “all aims and activities belonging to us as objective scientists or even simply as [ordinary] people desirous of [this kind of] knowledge.”<sup>93</sup> The external, objective world and all knowledge related to it is bracketed; this knowledge continues to exist, but it is put out of play. Through this we bracket the mathematization of the world and find the original life-world it arises from. Finding the life-world is essential for Husserl. It is no longer a question of realizing the general thesis of the natural world and bracketing it. Phenomenology must begin in the more originary life-world and not the various worlds built upon it because the life-world itself exercises a motivating force.

We see this when Husserl recasts the epoché as a “vocation”. Husserl uses the German word *berufszeit* which means “working hours” but has the sense of a “calling”. When we take up a calling, committing time to a certain vocation, we bracket non-relevant parts of our life. Sitting here, writing my thesis, I have put off paying the bills due at the end of the month and other practical matters that do not pertain to this work. These things continue to exist for me, but I have put my interest towards them aside as I focus on the task at hand. In the same way there is a particular vocational time for writing my thesis, there is a vocational time for inquiry into the life-world. I am *interested* in understanding the life-world and put aside my other interests to

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<sup>92</sup> This new way to the transcendental is called the ontological way because begins with an analysis of a particular ontological region.

<sup>93</sup> Husserl, *Crisis*, 135.

pursue this goal. This interest is important because we are no longer taking up the transcendental ego's ability to doubt on a whim but being called to this peculiar kind of abstaining reflection by an interested relation to the life-world.

It is important to note that despite this new metaphor of vocation to explain the epoché, Husserl does not equate all vocations. The vocation of the phenomenologist remains a privileged way to knowledge akin to a “religious conversion” which “bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to mankind as such.”<sup>94</sup>

At this point we continue to exist in the life-world but have bracketed the findings of objective theoretical interests, our general interest in objective knowledge, scientific or otherwise. We can continue to live straightforwardly in the world that now presents itself with all my goals and interests intact. This is a form of thematic consciousness of the life-world in which the world still exists in its everydayness for me due to my continued interest in it.

But the life-world can be thematic in yet another sense. Instead of continuing to focus on objects in the everydayness of our lives, we can direct our attention to the how of the objects themselves. Normally, in the coherence of our everyday life, we are interested in the how of our *projects*. How do I make a table spending the least amount of money? How do I cut the grass in as little time as possible? The objects involved these projects fade into the background and the project itself takes center stage.

Instead of focusing on the project itself we can turn our attention to the how of the objects themselves. How is it that this completed table appears before me? How do I come to know whether the grass I'm standing on is cut or uncut? For Husserl this new focus does not

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

only apply to objects within the world, but the givenness of the world itself. We begin to focus on “*how*, throughout the alteration of relative validities, subjective appearances, and opinions, the coherent, universal validity *world – the world* – comes into being for us.”<sup>95</sup>

Husserl characterizes this new focus as a shift in interest to the subjective. In asking the how of the objects, the subjective bursts onto the scene and cannot be ignored. There can be no question that the table is there only through experience, and thematizing this experience opens a new field of study. We can now analyze the subjective pole and its role in the appearing of these objects.

But as soon as we realize this potential field of study we find the bracketing of the natural scientific world to be inadequate. In this bracketing we do not question the givenness of the world, its being is never put in question. Once we ask how the life-world is given, the being of the world becomes a problem. Indeed, we cannot study the pregiveness of the world if we remain in the life-world where the givenness of the world is taken for granted.

In order to open the givenness of the world to study, Husserl introduces the epoché of the general thesis where “one puts out of action, with one blow, the total performance running through the whole of natural world-life and through the whole network (whether concealed or open) of validities.”<sup>96</sup> By this, Husserl means that we do not simply assume the existence of the world, we put out of play every assurance we have that the things in front of me exist independently of me. Husserl calls this the transcendental reduction, where the world is reduced

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 144. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

to phenomena. In this abstention we reach an attitude which is “*above* the pregivenness of the validity of the world.”<sup>97</sup>

From this point we can move on to transcendental reduction where we discover “the universal, absolutely self-enclosed and absolutely self-sufficient correlation between the world itself and world-consciousness.”<sup>98</sup>

Husserl also introduces us to a new field of research he had yet to explore in his work - the ontology of the life-world. Obviously within the transcendental reduction any ontology is impossible since we have suspended the question of the phenomena’s being. Husserl says that we must begin the ontology of the life-world “within the ‘natural attitude’.”<sup>99</sup>

This ontology of the life-world is unique in that it is a phenomenological ontology and therefore different from the a priori ontologies studied through traditional philosophy or the natural sciences. Whereas the natural sciences seek to overcome the subjective experiences of different subjects by understanding the objective a priori structure of the world which underlies experience, an ontology of the life-world focuses on the general structure of the relative forms of the life-world.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, for Husserl the a priori of the “pure life-world” is what grounds the natural-scientific a priori.<sup>101</sup> The ontology of the life-world would consist in uncovering the life-world’s “general structure, to which everything that exists relatively is bound.”<sup>102</sup> This direction is remarkable because it is the first time in Husserl’s work that an object of study outside of the transcendental field is given any importance.

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 150. Husserl’s emphasis.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

It may seem that this is simply another means to the same end; the ontological way still begins in the natural attitude and allows us to find the transcendental. However, the process which brings us from the mundane world to the transcendental makes all the difference in how we understand the mundane world, the transcendental, and their relation. Much like how proper lighting can bring out hidden qualities of the objects in a photograph, the ontological way brings into relief qualities that were hidden in the Cartesian way.

The next section will explain exactly how the ontological way reveals precisely what the Cartesian way ignored, but for now a brief example will illustrate how this new method has subtle but important effects on Husserl's work. Through the ontological way, the relationship between the realm of the natural attitude and the transcendentially purified realm begins to shift. In the Cartesian way the transcendental realm is found through bracketing the general thesis and then looking outside the brackets for what must necessarily exist. It is difficult to understand what motivates us to seek the transcendental or how we are able to search for it. Commenting on the possibility of the reduction, Husserl says "The attempt to doubt universally belongs to the realm of our *perfect freedom*: we can *attempt to doubt* anything whatever, no matter how firmly convinced of it, even assured of it in adequate evidence, we may be."<sup>103</sup> The mundane and transcendental are separated by an abyss that can only be crossed by radical scepticism.

In the ontological way the relation between the mundane and transcendental as well as our motivation and ability to cross the bridge which connects them is much clearer. We see that the reduction is a worldly vocation, motivated by the worldly desire to understand the fundamental stratum of our experience. We do not find the transcendental by retreating from the world, as though we were going backstage at a theatre performance, but by *living in* the world

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<sup>103</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 58. Husserl's emphasis.

and picking up the many threads it gives us to follow. It is the mundane and the questions it presents us that lead us to the transcendental. We can pass from one to the other because there is no longer an abyss separating the two.

This shift in method gives us new eyes to see the whole of Husserl's thought. More than a simple shift in tone or tendency, it significantly affects the transcendental-phenomenological project. If discussing Husserl's method is tantamount to discussing his system at a whole, then even the slightest change in method will reverberate throughout his entire system.

### *How the Ontological Way Fills in the Gaps*

In *Crisis*, Husserl states that the ontological way serves to bring into relief and clarify aspects of the phenomenological reduction which the Cartesian way obscures. The Cartesian way brings the transcendental ego into view "apparently empty of content."<sup>104</sup> The ontological way reaches the transcendental through the life-world, emphasizing the intentional relation between the two. Husserl would argue that this relation is present from his earliest work, but because of the bracketing of the world and emphasis on the transcendental ego it is not as apparent.

While for Husserl this shift is about shining a light on the constituted world and its intentional relation to the transcendental ego, the ontological way also serves to shine a light on important transcendental structures which began to form at the end of *Cartesian Meditations* and in the personal work leading up to *Crisis*.

The concept of the life-world emerges from the thickness of the objective world constituted by transcendental intersubjectivity. This thickness comes from the fact that the world

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

in its objectivity is something I take part in constituting but it is not reducible to my individuality. The Cartesian way, with its focus on the isolated transcendental ego, fails to grapple with this world in its objectivity since it obscures the transcendental structure producing the objectivity.

The life-world takes on a life outside my ego and is recognized as an important ground where phenomenological reflections begin. In order to recognize and investigate this ground, Husserl begins in it and rather than immediately bracketing the existence of the world, allows the life-world itself to lead to the transcendental through the intentional threads that tie it together. In this way the life-world doesn't appear as a product at the end of a phenomenological investigation but takes its proper place as the ground of any reflection at all.

Due to the emphasis on the life-world, the fundamental role that transcendental intersubjectivity plays becomes much more apparent. As already mentioned, any experience of the world points to Others both as phenomena and co-constituting subjects: "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"<sup>105</sup>. When we begin in the life-world mundane objects are allowed to appear in the world I inhabit, pointing to the Other. Already, the way to transcendental intersubjectivity and its central role in the constitution of the world is furnished.

In *Crisis*, transcendental intersubjectivity is not the end of the analysis but present from the beginning as a fundamental structure. In what he calls a preliminary concept of transcendental constitution Husserl says that "We are dealing, rather, with the entire

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<sup>105</sup> Husserl quoted in Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 119.

intersubjectivity which is brought together in the accomplishment – and here the concepts of “what is,” of “manners of givenness,” of “syntheses,” etc., are repeatedly relativized”<sup>106</sup>. Indeed, later on he goes as far as to say that “subjectivity is what it is – and ego functioning constitutively – only within intersubjectivity”<sup>107</sup>.

Through the ontological way Husserl is able to begin the process of breaking out of the natural attitude with the life-world and intersubjectivity clearly in view, something that simply was not possible in the Cartesian way.

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<sup>106</sup> Husserl, *Crisis*, 167.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

# Chapter Five

## Conclusion

In this thesis we have seen the development of two different but interrelated concepts. First, the concept of intersubjectivity. Beginning from the transcendental ego revealed through the Cartesian way, Husserl traces how the Other is constituted and how the Other is essential to the objectivity of the world. It is only through metaphysical speculation that Husserl finds this intersubjectivity to be transcendental. Beginning from the transcendental ego is it difficult to bring the constitutive structure of intersubjectivity into view from the beginning of the analysis. In this way the Cartesian way proves inadequate.

Related to this are the various dimensions of the world Husserl lays out. Once again, through the Cartesian reduction, we begin in the natural world, which is solely constituted by the transcendental ego but in analyzing transcendental intersubjectivity the constitution of the objectivity world is explained. The objective world recognizes the intersubjective constitution of the world while the natural world, as understood through the Cartesian way, remains subjectively constituted. With the objective world being constituted intersubjectively, I realize that the world is not solely constituted by the transcendental ego. This gives us the sense that the world cannot simply be reduced to the intentionality of the ego but must be interrogated in its own right; eventually leading to the robust concept of the life-world. With the life-world emerging as both a specific daily world and the structure allowing for worlds, a structure constituted in transcendental intersubjectivity, again the Cartesian way proves inadequate.

It is because of these shortcomings that the ontological way is developed. Through the ontological way the life-world is emphasized and, as an intersubjective world, the transcendental structure of intersubjectivity is more easily realized.

This thesis also attempted to contribute to the fields of Sociology and CSPT by providing a picture of Husserl not often discussed. It has tried to offer a picture of intersubjectivity within the transcendental phenomenological project. Instead of reducing the Other to the self, the Other leads us to realize the intersubjective nature of transcendental subjectivity. It has also tried to paint a more robust picture of Husserl as a thinker who tried to incorporate the problems of intersubjectivity and history into his original idea of transcendental phenomenology as first philosophy.

In one of his final personal writings, Husserl says

I have drafted different introductions into transcendental-phenomenological philosophy...We shall see that this life-world is nothing but the historical world. From here, it becomes conceivable that a complete systematic introduction into phenomenology begins and is carried through as a universal historical problem. If one introduces the epoché without the historic framing, then the problem of the life-world, i.e., of universal history, remains unsolved and still beckons. The introduction in *Ideas* [the Cartesian way] does in fact retain its right, but I now consider the historical way to be more principal and systematic.<sup>108</sup>

Indeed, the Cartesian way must retain its right. Not only is it the way that revealed to us its own blind spots but it brings into relief the transcendental ego which still holds an important place in Husserl's project. The ontological way is more systematic because it reveals the transcendental in relation to the concrete world it arises from and emphasizes the intentional connection between the two. The transcendental is thought more broadly than the ego, making room for transcendental intersubjectivity and the life-world comes into view as a structure and field of

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108 Husserl quoted in Luft, *Subjectivity and Lifeworld*, 74.

inquiry. By understanding the structure of the life-world we can better understand transcendental intersubjectivity, a concept that Husserl's reduction seems ill-equipped to handle, since it is a constituting structure of which I am part and not the constituting structure I am, as is the case with the transcendental structures of sensation, time, space, etc.

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