



CHAPTER 12

CONSCIOUSNESS
IN THE WORLD


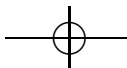

HUSSERLIAN
PHENOMENOLOGY
AND EXTERNALISM



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1. INTRODUCTION

DURING the last two decades, talk about ‘phenomenology’ has proliferated in some quarters of analytic philosophy. Often the expression has been used as a portmanteau term for the conscious ‘what-it-is-likeness’ of experience (or its phenomenal contents), without much attention to, or interest in, the structural articulations of this what-it-is-likeness. But it is precisely the analysis of these structures that has been the central concern of phenomenology, understood as the distinctive philosophical tradition that was inaugurated by Edmund Husserl, and subsequently continued and modified by philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the early (pre-1930) Martin Heidegger, to name but the most eminent figures. Phenomenology in this



second, technical, sense has also received increasing attention in analytic circles in recent years, largely for two reasons. First, the work of the later, ‘existential’ phenomenologists has been found helpful in elucidating the fundamental constitutive role played in conscious intentionality by embodied practical comportment, in particular by skilled bodily action.¹ Secondly, Husserl’s classical phenomenology has been recognized as anticipating the thought, influentially articulated in Gareth Evans’s *The Varieties of Reference*, that the contents of personal-level intentionality are not exhaustively analysable by way of the analysis of their linguistic expression; and in particular, that the contents of perception play a foundational role, although they do not have the structure of fully linguistically articulable propositions.²

Yet, while Heidegger’s (and Merleau-Ponty’s) versions of phenomenology may be suggestive, their work is often also seen, not entirely without reason, as not very hospitable to some of the fine-grained distinctions relevant to a philosophical analysis of intentional content. Husserl, by contrast, certainly does offer an extremely nuanced conceptual arsenal in this respect, but his approach is often thought to be irremediably compromised by two problematic, and related, methodological commitments: (1) a form of ‘Cartesian’ content internalism, according to which a subject can have thoughts about itself and the world without having any warranted *beliefs* about a world of real external (spatial) objects; (2) the idea that conscious thought about the world is at the basic level epistemically indirect, involving mediating entities of some kind, such as Fregean senses.³

I shall offer an alternative interpretation of Husserl which rejects both of these exegetical claims. This will require some detailed attention to a central, much-debated, indeed notorious, methodological technique of his: the so-called phenomenological (or transcendental) reduction. My argument will be that, properly understood, it entails neither (1) nor (2). According to the interpretation offered here, Husserl’s classical phenomenology is an

¹ Particularly influential here has been Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time’, Division 1*.

² For a conceptualist version of this claim, see John McDowell, *Mind and World*. Husserl’s anticipation of this general type of approach was made more widely known in an analytic context by Michael Dummett’s *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, a study whose interpretation of Husserl suffers, however, from a number of misunderstandings and from its exclusive focus on the early *Logical Investigations*.

³ For an influential interpretation of Husserl’s theory of intentionality as involving a commitment to such Fregean mediating entities, see David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality*.

externalist philosophy of conscious intentionality, according to which the logically basic level of world-representation is to be found in direct *perception*, the contents of which are, in principle, not fully linguistically encodable. Moreover, Husserl holds that the perceptual representation of a world is only possible for an embodied subject that is capable of self-movement and bodily action. Husserl's account of intentionality thus anticipates, and in some respects provides a more fundamental analysis of, the idea of extra-linguistic ground-level components of conscious intentional content that we find in contemporary philosophy of thought. On the other hand, it is also much closer to the later, 'existential' accounts of embodied intentionality than is often recognized, especially in the anglophone reception of his work. Indeed it could be argued to capture most (although not all) of what is right in the early Heidegger's emphasis on practical comportment, while avoiding some of its problems.

The argument of this essay is primarily about substantive philosophical issues, with current debates in view, rather than about interpretive matters.⁴ While the basis of the interpretation offered is of course in Husserl's own texts, where I have had to choose between either pursuing exegetical disputes, or the philosophical development or discussion of a position found or suggested in the texts, I have opted for the latter. The structure of the essay is as follows. Section 2 briefly introduces the mature Husserl's philosophical project—the putatively foundational, 'transcendental' explication of the constitutive conditions of a subject's being able to represent a world at all—and Husserl's fundamental methodological principle—the idea that the claims of phenomenology are to be based on what is 'self-given' in experience. The central Sections 3 and 4 of the essay will address and defend the most controversial, and most often misinterpreted, aspects of Husserl's phenomenological approach: the suspension of (certain types of) 'theory', and what he sometimes refers to as the 'bracketing' of beliefs about the real world. In the concluding Section 5, I shall offer some brief reflections on how Husserl's phenomenological (in a quasi-Kantian sense, 'empirical') externalist realism relates to stronger, metaphysical claims. This will also indicate the shape of an answer to the question why, for Husserl and the philosophical tradition inaugurated by him, phenomenology, rather than metaphysics or the epistemology of the actual world, is 'first philosophy'.

⁴ For a more extensive discussion of the interpretive issues, see Zahavi, 'Husserl's Noema and the Internalism-Externalism Debate'.

2. HUSSERL'S AIMS: EXPLICATING THE CONDITIONS OF REPRESENTATION AND SUBJECTIVITY

For Husserl, the fundamental issue of philosophy, as he comes to conceive of it with increasing clarity in his middle period and later writings from 1907 onwards, is a transcendental inquiry into the question of how it is possible that a world should be representable by a subject:

Elucidating in their entirety the interwoven [*Ineinander*] achievements of consciousness which lead to the constitution of a possible world—a possible world: this means that what is at issue is the essential form of world in general and not just our factual, actual world—this is the comprehensive task of constitutive phenomenology. (*EJ*, §11, p. 50/50)⁵

'Constitution', here as elsewhere in Husserl, must of course not be understood as 'creation' but as 'constitution-for-experience', that is, as roughly synonymous with 'manifestation to consciousness'. His question thus is about what is *constitutively* required for a world to be experientiable by someone at all, and about the necessary structures of this 'constitution'. Husserl never argues in detail for the claim that the representation of objects necessarily requires consciousness, but from the outset seems to regard it as self-evident that the relation of representation, in any sense that might be relevant to a transcendental investigation into the conditions of the possibility of there being a world for a subject, is essentially a matter of intentional experiences ('acts') in which objects 'appear' to a consciousness (see, e.g., *LI 5*, §8, II/1, p. 362/II, p. 93). And by 'consciousness' he means what is sometimes referred to as 'phenomenal consciousness', involving various phenomenal, experienced properties, a certain 'what-it-is-likeness'. The task of phenomenology consists in an explication of the actual complexity of this what-it-is-likeness.⁶

⁵ This and all subsequent translations from Husserl are mine. Husserl's conception of philosophy contrasts markedly with much of the mainstream of modern philosophy since Descartes, where either metaphysical questions ('how do our subjective representations relate to what there really is?'), or questions of factual epistemology ('how can we attain knowledge of the actual world?'), have tended to be taken to be fundamental. It is not my intention here to provide a defence of the motivations for the philosophical reorientation, the 'phenomenological turn' initiated by Husserl, but some suggestions on this score will be made in the conclusion.

⁶ One of the many important distinctions here—emphasized by Husserl but often conflated in contemporary discussions—is the distinction between the phenomenal properties of *experiences* and

Many contemporary philosophers of mind would argue that the conditions minimally required for an information-processing system to count as representational do not include phenomenal consciousness.⁷ But it is doubtful whether Husserl would want to contest, and he certainly does not *need* to deny, that functional analogues of conscious representation can be defined over sets of subpersonal states. His question is not whether something sharing some or many of the features of our everyday concept of representation is usefully applicable to certain sorts of non-conscious information-processing. His central point should rather be taken to be that whether this is so or not, without evidences presenting themselves phenomenally to our consciousness, ‘there would be *for us* . . . no real and no ideal world. Both of these exist *for us* thanks to evidence or the presumption of being able to make evident and to repeat acquired evidence’ (*CM*, §27, p. 96/60).⁸ ‘Objects exist *for us* and are *for us* what they are only as objects of actual or possible consciousness’ (*CM*, §30, p. 99/65; all emphases mine). His thought here is that there could be no personal-level representations, no *world for a subject*, without this world manifesting itself in or to phenomenal consciousness. Whether this thesis can be vindicated depends in part on what is implied by the phrase ‘for a subject’. One reasonably uncontroversial interpretation of this would be to say that the content of an informational state is available to the subject being in that state just in case the subject is in fact able to use this content in rationalizing his or her actions and judgements. This condition on personal-level representational content comes fairly close to what Ned Block calls a representational content’s being *access-conscious*.⁹ Yet, according to

those which *objects* appear as having when experienced (e.g. the red surface colour of a tomato). As Michael Martin notes, a great deal of qualia talk in current debates equivocates on these different meanings of ‘what it is like’. See Martin, ‘Setting Things before the Mind’, 158–66.

⁷ One illuminating account of subpersonal representation is J. L. Bermúdez’s, according to which states of an information-processing system can count as representational if they satisfy the conditions of (a) plasticity and flexibility in relation to environmental stimuli, (b) cognitive integration with other states of the system, (c) compositional structure, and (d) possession of correctness conditions defined in terms of proper or improper functioning. None of these conditions require the presence of phenomenal consciousness. (J. L. Bermúdez, ‘Nonconceptual Content: From Perceptual Experience to Subpersonal Computational States’, 333–67.)

⁸ ‘Evidence’ (*Evidenz*) is a technical term in Husserl, signifying, in the wider sense relevant in the above citation, the direct presentation or ‘self-giveness’ of the intentional object in experience (see *EJ*, §4). An item X is directly presented (self-given) in consciousness just in case there is no conscious epistemic intermediary representing or standing for X. Husserl also calls direct presentation ‘originary’.

⁹ Ned Block, ‘On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness’, 227–47. The analogy is not precise, however, since Block also allows contents to be access-conscious in circumstances where the subjects ‘entertaining’ them possess no concepts relevant for using the contents in inference (p. 246).

Block, it is conceptually possible that a content should be access-conscious, being poised for use as a premise in reasoning and for the rational control of actions, without being phenomenally conscious. It is precisely this conceptual possibility which Husserl denies. Block illustrates his anti-phenomenological point by the following thought-experiment (p. 233). Imagine a subject that is like what a blindsight subject claims to be, having no phenomenal consciousness at all of parts of his visual field. Yet, unlike a real blindsighter, he can not only make correct guesses, when prompted, about what is in the occluded part of his visual field, when given the choice among a limited number of relatively simple alternatives. Rather, this ‘superblindsighter’ can prompt himself at will to make correct ‘guesses’ about what is in his blind field about a wide range of objects. ‘Visual information from his blind field simply pops into his thoughts’ (ibid.). According to Block, this would be a case of access-consciousness without phenomenal consciousness. However, the crucial question to ask here is whether the superblindsighter could come to regard his (*de facto* correct) guesses as *reasons* for belief or action. It seems that, while he would have a method of acquiring information that was in fact reliable, he would have no grounds recognizable by him to regard it as such. But information that is not recognizable by me as a reason cannot be a reason *for me*. As far as the superblindsighter is concerned, the correctness of his guesses is no different from a bizarre fluke.¹⁰ But even to say this is to help oneself to the idea that he has a way of finding out that his guesses have been correct. But how should he establish *this* without some further information that is *not* phenomenally unconscious to him? Only if at least some of his representations are phenomenally conscious can he recognize the correctness of his guesses and, as a consequence, inferentially come to regard them as reasons for belief. Thus, access consciousness cannot generally be independent of phenomenal consciousness, if we want to hold on to the idea that, for something to qualify as a subject’s reason for judgements and other actions, it has to be in principle available to, and therefore recognizable by, the subject. Without phenomenal consciousness, nothing can constitute a reason *for* a subject. And this is precisely *one* part of Husserl’s point in the following passage:

Direct ‘seeing’, not only sensory seeing of spatio-temporal particulars, but seeing quite generally understood as consciousness that presents something originarily [i.e.

¹⁰ Similar arguments can be found in Lowe, ‘Experience and its Objects’, 90–5, and Eilan, ‘Perceptual Intentionality. Attention and Consciousness’, 182–4.

directly] in whatever way, is the ultimate source of justification for all rational assertions. . . . It would be incoherent, when answering the question ‘why?’, to give no weight to the response ‘I am seeing it’. (*Id 1*, §19, pp. 36/36–7)

This passage also alludes to a related methodological commitment of Husserl’s, which he sometimes calls his ‘principle of principles’: the phenomenological investigation of a subject matter requires that the latter be made directly (‘originarily’) present in experience (e.g. *LI*, Introduction, §2; *Id 1*, §24). The aspiration expressed in his slogan ‘back to the things themselves’ is that the philosopher qua phenomenologist should confine herself to explicating descriptively what has thus been perceived or otherwise directly given to the investigator in its phenomenal character. Husserl’s thought here is that anything that is *constitutive* for world-manifestation would have to be accessible in direct experience.

In fact, his ‘principle of principles’ is even more restrictive. The position he eventually adopts is that phenomenological claims are to be exclusively about what has been, and can again be, self-given with ‘apodictic’ evidence, i.e. effectively about what is presented as indubitable or certain, such that any subsequent falsification is inconceivable to the investigator, or to any subject having a type-identical presentation, at the time of having it (*CM*, §§6–7). It is clear that Husserl’s motivation for this exceedingly demanding conception of phenomenological investigation is the classical foundationalist aspiration to provide philosophy with a set of basic non-inferential propositions that are known with certainty to be true—this is at least part of the import of his claim that phenomenology is to provide an ‘absolute’ starting point for philosophical inquiry (*Id 1*, §§46, 50; *CM*, §§3–6).¹¹

What sort of items can be apodictically self-given, according to Husserl? In his later work, he recognizes that no categorical predicative judgement about contingent matters (e.g. about some particular experience or object-appearance) can plausibly claim such apodicticity: ‘in unqualifiedly apodictic evidence, self-explication brings out only the universal structural forms’

¹¹ Cf. Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, 194–5. Some commentators have denied that this Cartesian theme continues to motivate Husserl in his final period, since it does not appear prominently in his last work, the *Crisis* (1936). (See Kern, *Husserl und Kant: Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus*, 236. Also Carr, ‘The “Fifth Meditation” and Husserl’s Cartesianism’, 14–15.) But the emphatic presence of the Cartesian requirement of indubitability from the middle period *Ideas I* (1913) to the late *Cartesian Meditations* (1929) seems to me to tell against such interpretations. In fact, even in *Crisis*, while the theme is indeed no longer prominent, Husserl still insists on the apodicticity of phenomenological claims. See *Crisis*, §15, p. 73/72.

(*CM*, §46 p. 133/103). And it is only these ‘universal structural forms’ that phenomenology is ultimately concerned with; all its truths are to be necessary truths about ‘eidetic’ states of affairs, intuited ‘originarily’ on the basis of actual or possible particulars—self-given or imagined—serving as illustrations of them (cf. *Crisis*, §§50–1; on imaginative illustration, see *Id 1*, §70).¹²

The problems with the exorbitant demand for absolute certainty are familiar and need not be rehearsed here. To mention but one obvious difficulty: how could I even have indubitable and persisting knowledge of the *meanings* of the words I have used to explicate the phenomena? Husserl himself in later writings comes close to recognizing the futility of the aspiration towards contentful (non-formal) apodictic truths. For he concedes that it is possible to be deceived in thinking that an evidence is genuinely apodictic (*FTL*, §58), a concession which would seem to render the appeal to apodicticity otiose. Arguably, nothing of significance is lost to phenomenology if it contents itself with claiming, for most of its results, an epistemic distinction less ambitious than apodicticity. This does not imply that Husserl’s ‘principle of principles’ is nugatory, but that the philosophically fruitful thought behind it (or behind a modified version of it) may be different from his own explicit justification of it. As in other contexts also, his actual *practice* is often more persuasive than his second-order reflective characterization of it. I suggest that the only aspect of his fundamental principle that is essential to this practice is this:

¹² These general structures also include the formal properties of objects qua objects, which ultimately ground the basic truths of logic. I shall not discuss in detail Husserl’s view that not only particulars, but also general features and structures, such as sensory properties and relations, or categorial properties, can be perceived on the basis of the presence of particulars exemplifying or instantiating them. Similarly, I shall not discuss his later methodological development of this idea—the so-called *eidetic reduction* (see *Id 1*, §§65–70; *Crisis*, §52). What is important in our context is only Husserl’s demand that the outcome of phenomenological reflection on the basis of particulars should be appropriately universalized. Phenomenological claims should not concern, say, the structure of *this* temporal object, but the necessary structure of all temporal objects qua temporal objects. The details of this process of intuition-based universalization (‘ideation’), which he analyses differently at different stages of his career (*LI 2*, §§1–4, and *EJ*, §§87–8), and indeed differently for different types of universals (*EJ*, §64d), need not concern us here. Let me just briefly remark that the tenet that there can be an ‘intuition’—a perception—of universals on the basis of particulars exemplifying them is originally developed by him as the only plausible answer to questions such as: what is it we do when we judge, on the basis of current experience, that *a* is red, or square, or smaller than *b*? His answer is that we express our noticing of a general feature, a *way of being* or universal, which is such that the very same universal can also be exemplified by indefinitely many other particulars. Husserl’s theory of a perception of properties and categorial structures is not without difficulties, although Husserlians would argue that this holds for any theory in this area and that greater problems are in store for rival theories which seek to dispense with such a notion. For a perceptive independent defence of the core Husserlian position, see T. L. S. Sprigge, *Facts, Words and Beliefs*, ch. 2.

phenomenological constitutive analysis should aim at a description of the essential intrinsic phenomenal features and structures of the conditions of world-manifestation on the basis of ‘intuitively fulfilled’ (re-)presentations of them.¹³ Such intuitive fulfilment, which should strive for as much relevant detail as possible, may involve perceptions or imaginative representations of exemplifications of these features, or, in the case of subjective experiential characters of conscious episodes (their ‘noetic’ features), ‘living through’ (*erleben*) or simulating them (see note 53 below). What justifies this modified Husserlian methodological requirement of ‘intuitive fulfilment’ is the compelling thought that no descriptive account of the essential *phenomenal* structures of the constitutive conditions of world-manifestation can be well-grounded unless it has a basis, ultimately, in such suitably direct experience.

3. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION: A STORY OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Among the methodological devices of Husserlian phenomenology, the one which undoubtedly has attracted most criticism, even among the first generation of his students, is the so-called phenomenological (or ‘transcendental’) reduction. Husserl developed this procedure in lectures from 1907 onwards and it finds its first canonical statement in *Ideas I*:

Everything belonging to the natural world that comes experientially to consciousness prior to all thinking . . . has the character: ‘there’, ‘actually occurring’ [*vorhanden*]—a character which essentially permits an explicit (predicative) existential judgement based upon it . . . This general thesis that pertains to the essence of the natural attitude we put out of action; we place in brackets all and everything that it

¹³ ‘Intrinsic’ is intended to contrast with ‘extrinsic’, not with ‘conceptually non-relational’. *Being loved by y* is an extrinsic property of x, but *being in love with y* is an intrinsic (albeit conceptually relational) property of x. The demand that phenomenology should offer elucidations of the intrinsic features of its target objects makes for an obvious contrast with *functionalist* theories, which provide characterizations of their objects in terms of their functional role. While no actual entity can have a functional role without having some *in principle* ‘intuitable’ intrinsic properties, functionalist analysis abstracts from the latter. Such abstraction is, for Husserl, legitimate in the context of natural science (*Crisis*, §9a, p. 23/26; §34d), whose central aim is prediction. But it is unacceptable in a discipline which, like phenomenology, aims to offer a *fundamental* account of the constitutive conditions of world-manifestation.

embraces ontically, . . . I practise the ‘phenomenological’ *εποχή*, which disallows any judgement about spatio-temporal existence. Thus I suspend [*schalte aus*] all the sciences relating to this natural world. . . I make absolutely no use of its valid claims. . . consciousness has in itself its own being, which in its absolutely own essence is not affected by the phenomenological suspension. Thus it remains as ‘phenomenological residuum’ . . . (*Id 1*, §§31–2, pp. 53/57–8, 56–7/61, 59/65)

And thus we ask quite generally, keeping in mind these suspensions, what is ‘inherent’ in the whole ‘reduced’ phenomenon. Well then, what is inherent in a perception is also this, that it has a noematic sense, its ‘perceived as such’: ‘this blossoming tree there in space’—understood with the quotation marks—that is, the correlate essentially pertaining to the phenomenologically reduced perception. . . . The ‘bracketing’ which has been applied to the perception prevents any judgement about the perceived reality. . . . But it does not prevent a judgement that the perception is consciousness as of a reality (whose thesis must now not be ‘gone along with’, however); and it does not prevent a description of this perceptually appearing ‘reality as such’, with the specific modes in which it is conscious, e.g. . . . appearing in this or that orientation, etc. . . . we must now take care not to attribute anything to the experience than what is essentially contained in it, and to ‘attribute’ this to it just as it actually is ‘inherent’ in it. (*Id 1*, §90, pp. 187–8/220–1)

The two central methodological demands expressed in these passages are that the philosopher qua phenomenologist must

- (1) give faithful explicative analyses of the experiences under investigation *and* of their objects just as they are experienced, without recourse to *scientific-theoretical* interpretations, and
- (2) suspend any ‘judgement about spatio-temporal existence’.

(1) will turn out to be relatively straightforward and I shall therefore address this demand first. The idea runs like a red thread through Husserl’s writings that phenomenology must be ‘presuppositionless’ in not using any premises, and not relying even implicitly on assumptions from scientific, metaphysical, or common-sense ‘theories’ (see e.g. *LI*, Introduction, §7; *EJ*; §10). Its motivation is twofold. First, there is the problematic ‘Cartesian’ motif we have already encountered: no such theoretical claims can claim apodictic status. Husserl’s second motivation for the demand for theoretical abstemiousness is, however, independent of, and more compelling than, his commitment to a Cartesian ideal of knowledge. Scientific and metaphysical theories are intended as explanations of the phenomena of our everyday life-world. Their explanatory power in part depends on correct descriptions of these phenomena—a theory putatively explaining a phenomenon that has been significantly misdescribed is not an explanation of that phenomenon

at all. But any ‘theoretical’ assumptions entering into the description of phenomena themselves are liable to promote such erroneous descriptive characterization of the explananda. For example, the idea, shared by common sense and the physical cognitive sciences, that consciousness of objective properties of the world depends upon causal impacts which instances of these properties, or causal powers associated with them, have upon the organism’s peripheral nerve endings, creates a theoretical pressure to construe properties for which no appropriate causal role or mechanism can be found—such as the Lockean secondary properties, or value properties—as ‘subjective’ in the sense of ‘intramental’ (non-world-involving), and their instances as analogous to sensations or raw, non-intentional ‘qualia’. But this construal, hardly less widespread today than in the days of Locke, necessitates a radical misdescription of the very phenomena allegedly explained by the theory:

It is a bad legacy of the psychological tradition since Locke that the sensible qualities of the bodies genuinely experienced in our everyday perceptible environment . . . , which are perceived as in the bodies themselves, are continually conflated with . . . ‘sense data’ [a conflation which results in] the fundamentally mistaken view . . . that what is immediately given are ‘sense data’. (*Crisis*, §9b, pp. 27–28n./30n.)

This example illustrates one potentially critical dimension of phenomenology as conceived by Husserl: no theory that is incompatible with a correct description of the phenomena can be adequate as an *explanation* of those phenomena. A necessary condition upon theoretical adequacy is that a theory should ‘save the phenomena’.

The demand that the phenomenologist must aim to describe the ‘given as it is given’, purified of any theoretical prejudgements, does *not* commit Husserl to a version of what Sellars called the ‘myth of the given’—the thought that epistemic justification has its foundation in pre-theoretical, in the sense of *non-conceptualized*, data or impressions.¹⁴ On the contrary, phenomenological analysis shows that such data are not discretely present in normal, attentionally focused experience at all:

The world in which we live and . . . out of which everything that can become a substrate of possible judgements affects us, is always already pre-given as pervaded by sedimentations of logical accomplishments; it is never given otherwise than as a world in which we or others, whose experiential acquisitions we take over through

¹⁴ See W. Sellars, ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind’, esp. pp. 164–96.

communication, learning, tradition, have been logically active in judgements and cognitions. (EJ, §10, p. 39/42)

Every object of simple (*schlicht*) conscious awareness, e.g. of sense perception, is necessarily presented as exemplifying a ‘generality of a determinate type. Its appearance awakens protentional anticipations regarding its being thus-and-so’ (EJ, §22, p. 114/105). Husserl’s reasons for this claim are extremely perceptive, but a discussion of them will have to wait for another occasion. The important point in the present context is that he agrees with Kant that any completely non-conceptual experience is not experience of *objects* at all and hence cannot be cognitive (representational), although it may well contribute to cognitive states by guiding or motivating practical comportment (see pp. 429–30, 439–41). But what, then, does Husserl’s distinction between ‘theoretical interpretation’ and ‘describing the given just as it is given’ come to? The passage just cited provides a clue to the answer. Some conceptualizations of objects, events, or persons in our environment have the character of what he calls ‘sedimented’ ‘familiarities’ for us (EJ, §10, p. 39/42; §22, p. 114/105); this means, for one thing, that those items are perceived by us *non-inferentially* under the aspects registered through the concepts in question. Having received the appropriate training and cultural immersion, one can non-inferentially recognize, for example, certain bodily movements as expressions of anger. To say that this conceptualization is ‘sedimented’ in a subject’s very perception of another’s behaviour is to say, first, that the applicability of the concept is not consciously inferred from the applicability of other concepts. The subject does not reason: this person is knitting his brow, clenching his fist, and stamping his foot; such behaviours are normally signs of anger; therefore this person is (probably) angry. Rather, ‘being angry’ is a *basic* perceptual concept (for this subject and in this situation). Secondly, the conceptualization ‘this person is angry’ is ‘sedimented’ in that it is *involuntary* rather than the result of an active decision, or even of reflective deliberation, on the part of the subject. So, when Husserl calls for a ‘theory-free’ description of what is given as it is given, he means by this a description of it as it non-inferentially, involuntarily, and pre-deliberatively presents itself to us.

(2) The second essential component of the phenomenological reduction as Husserl conceives it is the suspension of ‘any judgement about spatio-temporal existence’. I shall again postpone the question of the motivation for this requirement and shall first try to elucidate what it actually commits its practitioners to. Phenomenology is to describe consciousness and its objects

just as they are presented to consciousness without entering into any commitments about the existence of *either* the states of consciousness described (*Id 1*, §33, p. 57/63) or any of their objects. The ‘phenomenological residuum’ that is claimed to remain after this ‘bracketing’ of existential commitments Husserl sometimes calls ‘transcendental consciousness’, and the task of phenomenology as envisaged by him is the investigation of its structures. This investigation he also refers to as *phenomenological* (or transcendental) *reflection*. What is distinctive of such ‘reflection’? Ordinary (‘natural’ or ‘psychological’) reflection is defined by Husserl as an attending to (‘thematizing’) the experiential quality (the ‘noetic moment’) of some current intentional experience. Consider the experience expressed by the following sentence:

I am imagining Odysseus’s coming on shore in Ithaca.

Psychological reflection on this experience involves attending to one’s current *imagining* (rather than perceiving, wishing for, regretting, remembering, etc.) the state of affairs which is its intentional object and which happens in this case to be a fictional object.¹⁵ Transcendental reflection, unlike such natural reflection, abstains from any theoretical or existential commitments concerning what is being reflected upon. Moreover, again unlike natural reflection, its focus is not necessarily on what is intra-psychic, subjective, or ‘inner’—i.e. it is *not* originally ‘introspective’—for transcendental reflection involves a thematizing not only of the subjective, noetic moment of a current experience but, *necessarily prior* to this, of its noematic component, that is, the intentional *object* just as it is experienced (*Crisis*, §§50, 51).¹⁶ Through transcendental reflection and the faithful description of what is revealed in it, the phenomenological investigator is said to acquire a knowledge of consciousness and its objects qua appearances, that is, of their actually experienced phenomenal character, whatever the metaphysical significance

¹⁵ Cf. *Id 1*, §38. For an account of Husserl’s wide concept of object, which applies indifferently to actual or fictional states of affairs, material objects, phantoms, properties, and indirectly presented experiences, see below.

¹⁶ On the extended sense of ‘reflection’, which includes the thematizing of noemata and noematic senses (‘the object as it is intended’) and, founded upon this, of their essential properties, see e.g. *Id 2*, §4, p. 5/7; *Crisis*, §41. (For more on Husserl’s concept of noematic sense, see n. 49 and 50.) Neither the ‘object as intended’ in an intentional experience, nor its essence, are *reell* contained in the experience, i.e. they are in one sense ‘transcendent’ of, rather than ‘immanent’ in, the experience. See *Id 1*, §38, p. 68/79; *Id 1*, §97, p. 202/237. In later writings Husserl tends to stress that the most comprehensive thematic focus of transcendental reflection is on the *relations* between the structures of the object as it is given and the structures of conscious subjectivity which are necessary for the object thus to manifest itself. See *Crisis*, §§41, 51, 53; pp. 155/152, 177/174, 182/179.

of these appearances may be. It thus seems that Husserl believes that a reflective, conceptualized self-consciousness, terminating in the acquisition of various true beliefs about the subject's 'pure', that is, metaphysically uninterpreted, experiences and their conscious contents is possible without committing the investigator to any beliefs about the existence of a physical or otherwise 'external' world. Many critics of the transcendental reduction therefore tend to charge Husserl with subscribing to a version of 'Cartesian' content internalism, according to which the contents of (self-) consciousness are in principle independent of consciousness's being embedded in a world of real spatial objects. To give just two recent examples of this criticism, Mark Rowlands says that

for Husserl, it is possible to make the transcendental role of experience into an empirical item . . . he does believe that consciousness—experience in both empirical and transcendental roles—is *logically* prior to the physical world. Consequently, he also believes that an investigation of the structure of consciousness is *methodologically* prior to an investigation of the physical world.¹⁷

Similarly, Thomas Baldwin asserts:

Husserl . . . requires that [the philosopher] should not think of himself and his thoughts as elements within the natural world at all. He is not to suppose that his thoughts are the thoughts of a human being, located in objective time and space and standing in causal relations with other physical objects . . . It is this thesis, that there is a domain of pure consciousness . . . not conceptually dependent upon the natural world, which is distinctive of Husserl's phenomenology.¹⁸

I believe that these familiar, indeed orthodox, interpretations of the phenomenological reduction as implying a form of Cartesian content internalism or methodological solipsism are mistaken. My qualified defence of it as, in its essentials, unobjectionable from a moderate externalist perspective, and indeed as potentially fruitful, will proceed in three stages. First (i), I shall show that most of Husserl's more problematic formulations in this context allow for a philosophically less contentious reading; secondly (ii), I shall argue that the results of Husserl's own first-order analyses of the contents of intentional experiences and their 'order of foundation' actually *commit* him to a type of content externalism; thirdly, I shall suggest (in Section 4) that the phenomenological reduction is not only philosophically unexceptionable, but that it is a useful methodological device.

¹⁷ Mark Rowlands, *Externalism*, 60–1.

¹⁸ Thomas Baldwin, 'Phenomenology, Solipsism and Egocentric Thought', 28–9.

(i) Another Look at the Textual Evidence

There are formulations by Husserl which *prima facie* support the interpretation of his position as a form of content internalism according to which, as Descartes suggests in his First Meditation, a finite subject can in principle have thoughts, including reflective thoughts about its own consciousness, even if it neither has well-grounded beliefs about a world of spatial objects causally affecting it nor is actually embedded in such a world. These potentially misleading formulations are mostly found in *Ideas I*, rather than in the later detailed discussions of the transcendental reduction in *Erste Philosophie* and *Crisis*. In *Ideas I* Husserl says, for instance, that as phenomenologists ‘we keep our gaze fixed on the sphere of consciousness and what we find immanently in it’ (*Id 1*, §33, p. 59/65). ‘Pure consciousness in its absolute intrinsic being . . . remains as the ‘phenomenological residuum’ we were looking for; it remains although we have ‘suspended’ [*ausgeschaltet*] the entire world with all its material objects, living organisms, humans, ourselves included’ (*Id 1*, §50, p. 94/113). In this last sentence, the method of phenomenological reduction seems to be fused, in a deeply problematic way, with Husserl’s advocacy, in *Ideas I* and subsequently, of a metaphysics of transcendental idealism, according to which consciousness has ‘absolute being’, while the physical world exists only relative to consciousness of it. Apparently continuous with this metaphysical view, in a notorious passage, he claims that even if there was no world of relatively persisting and re-identifiable spatial things representable by a consciousness, this consciousness could still continue to exist (‘albeit necessarily in a modified way’), for transcendental consciousness is

a nexus of absolute being into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can slip; which has no spatio-temporal exteriority and which is not situated within a spatio-temporal context, which can neither be causally affected by any thing nor affect any thing—provided that causality here is understood in the normal sense of natural causality, as a relation of dependence between [spatio-temporal] realities. (*Id 1*, §49, p. 93/112)

Let me take the three centrally problematic points in these formulations in turn. First, there is the idea that phenomenology focuses exclusively on what is ‘immanent’ in consciousness. In Husserl’s terminology, ‘immanence’ in the strict sense names the relation between a reflected-upon experience (*Erlebnis*) and an experience of reflecting upon that experience, for example the relation that obtains between a pain I am feeling and my *attending* to this pain (cf. *Id 1*, §38, pp. 68–9/79–80). The pain, as it is now thematically experienced

by virtue of my reflection upon it, is ‘fused’ with this attending to it, such that it—this very pain—could not continue to appear as it does without this act of reflection. The pain is, in this ‘objectified’ mode of presentation, ‘really contained within’ (*reell beschlossen*) the act of reflection and does not, in this objectified form, exist outside or beyond (‘transcend’) the reflection. Clearly most of the objects of phenomenological analysis are not ‘immanent in consciousness’ in *this* sense. For most types of object (e.g. physical things), the noematic ‘object as experienced’ is ‘transcendent’ relative to any individual experience of it (*Id 1*, §76, p. 142/171–2; §97, p. 202/237), and the universal phenomenal properties and structures which are the ultimate objects of phenomenological study are necessarily thus transcendent (see also note 16 above). As Husserl puts it, they are transcendent objects within ‘immanence’ (*CM*, §47). A phenomenal item’s being ‘immanent’ to consciousness here has the much looser sense of ‘manifesting itself in its constitutive phenomenal properties to the investigating consciousness’. And Husserl’s dictum that phenomenology proceeds ‘immanently’ then amounts, *not* to some kind of methodological introspectionism, but to nothing more controversial than the idea that phenomenology is to limit its investigations to what shows up within the first-personal perspective of the investigator’s (transcendentally ‘purified’) consciousness in an appropriately ‘intuitively fulfilled’ manner. This idea by itself is only ‘internalist’ in an invidious Cartesian sense on the phenomenologically unwarranted *theoretical* assumption, which Husserl has precisely asked us to leave aside (see above), that the intuitively accessible, phenomenal properties of objects are merely intramental effects of those objects and thus ontologically distinct from them.

Much more questionable is Husserl’s conflation in some places of the requirements of the reduction with the idealist thesis that consciousness has ‘absolute being’, since it cannot be dependent on any objects absolutely external to it, actual objects being only conceivable as relative to some actually existing consciousness.¹⁹ To be sure, this idealist thesis *by itself* does not, *pace* Baldwin (‘Phenomenology’, 30), make Husserl a content internalist, since it may well turn out that for Husserl, as for Kant, conceptualized contents of consciousness and self-consciousness are only possible for a subject that has good reasons for thinking of itself as embedded in a world of real objects *empirically* external

¹⁹ Herman Philipse has argued that idealist metaphysical commitments are already present in *Logical Investigations*, despite that work’s avowed metaphysical neutrality (‘Transcendental Idealism’, esp. 272–8).

to it.²⁰ But it is still clear that Husserl, by his own requirement of ontological presuppositionlessness, is not entitled to metaphysical characterizations of the results of the reduction, such as we find in his talk about transcendental consciousness being a region of ontologically ‘absolute being’ (*Id 1*, §49, p. 92/110). While there is nothing illicit about a phenomenologist *also* doing metaphysics, any metaphysical claims, by Husserl’s own injunctions, should be *posterior to* the use of the method of the reduction, and the latter must therefore be logically independent of them. Husserl, *on his own terms*, is at the fundamental level of his philosophical inquiry barred from a *metaphysical* reading of his assertion that the transcendental consciousness yielded by the reduction is ‘a nexus of absolute being . . . which can neither be causally affected by any thing nor affect any thing’ (*Id 1*, §49, p. 93/112). What he is entitled to is only an *epistemological* variant on this, to the effect that in the phenomenological attitude produced through the method of transcendental reduction, consciousness and its phenomenal objects are only *considered* as correlates, and the question of whether *this entire correlation* or nexus is an effect of causes that are ontologically independent of consciousness altogether, *cannot yet arise*—for this metaphysical causal question is, as it were, downstream from the transcendental constitutive questions with which phenomenology at the basic level concerns itself. Husserl’s articulation of this point in *Crisis* serves as a useful corrective to the occasionally misleading formulations in *Ideas I*:

Obviously what is required first of all is the *epoché* with respect to all objective sciences. This doesn’t simply mean abstracting from them . . . Rather, what is meant is an *epoché* of . . . the critical stance in which we are interested in their truth or falsity . . . (*Crisis*, §35, p. 138/135)

[T]he exclusive and persisting direction of our interest lies in *how* . . . the world gets constituted for us . . . (§38, p. 147/144)

Through the radical *epoché* every interest in the reality or unreality of the world is . . . put out of play. And in the pure correlationist attitude created by it, the world . . . itself becomes something subjective in a special sense. (§53, p. 182/179)

While the idealist elements in some of Husserl’s descriptions of the reduction are thus easily excised without significant loss, there remains his notorious

²⁰ In fact, such an empirical (or phenomenal) externalism is precisely the view Husserl holds (see below). An object is externally real in the relevant sense just in case it is veridically perceivable as having spatial and properties causal powers.

claim that consciousness could exist even if the world of physical objects were ‘annihilated’ (*Id 1*, §49, pp. 91–2/109–10). But there is no need to take his point here to be any stronger than that it is *conceptually* possible for there to be some kind of rhapsodic phenomenal consciousness even in the absence of a world empirically external to it. His qualification that such a consciousness would be ‘necessarily modified’, ‘soul-less’, and ‘non-personal’ (*Id 1*, §54, p. 105/127) may be taken as signalling his sympathy with the Kantian thought that such a consciousness would not have the resources to entertain conceptual, objectifying representations of anything at all, including itself.

(ii) Husserl’s Commitment to Content Externalism

I maintained earlier that many of Husserl’s own positions in fact commit him to a moderate version of content externalism. It is now time to make good this claim. As understood here, such an externalism about the contents of thoughts of certain types is the view that thoughts of these types—for example thoughts about physical objects, or thoughts about oneself or one’s experiences—are necessarily unavailable to a finite subject unless the subject is situated in a world of spatial objects causally affecting it and has well-grounded beliefs about that world. In this sort of externalism, the necessity operator is interpreted in terms of a stronger-than-nomological, ultimately conceptual necessity. It is difficult to see how such a thesis could be vindicated unless thoughts of the relevant types are necessarily dependent upon—are ‘founded upon’, in Husserl’s terminology—thoughts about such external objects, and if, furthermore, the fundamental thoughts of the latter type are *co-constituted* by items which we have good reasons to regard as real external objects.²¹ In the kind of externalism I have in mind, the fundamental type of thought about

²¹ Note that the above formulation deliberately falls short of saying that the fundamental thoughts apparently about the external world are co-constituted by *external objects*, or that external objects necessarily *enter into* these thoughts themselves. Such formulations seem too ambitious, although they are found frequently in the externalist literature (see, e.g., Campbell, *Reference and Consciousness*, 116–20). It would be surprising if scepticism about the particular constituents (as opposed to the general existence) of the external world could be refuted simply by reflection on what is entailed by the concept of thought, or of thought about particulars. For Husserl, it is not a priori impossible that the particular contents of all our past and present demonstrative thoughts subsequently turned out not to have been real external objects, but elements of a highly coherent and complex illusion—a scenario sometimes entertained in dystopian science fiction. If such a state of affairs actually obtained, the identity of our current demonstrative thoughts would be different from what we now take them

external objects is often considered to be perceptual demonstrative thought, for example the thought expressed by ‘this is spherical’, entertained about an object singled out perceptually by the subject from the ambient array. The demonstrative ‘this’ here expresses an incomplete sense, which is completed by the item pointed to *itself*, that is, in this instance, by a particular spherical object in the thinker’s environment as this is perceptually available to him. Thus the phenomenal object pointed to can be said to be itself a constituent of the thought expressed by ‘this is spherical’ on that occasion. If (a) perceptual thoughts are best analysed as object-involving in this sense, and if (b) they constitute a fundamental class of thoughts about external objects, without which such thoughts would not be possible at all, and if (c) other kinds of thoughts are in turn necessarily dependent on thoughts which we have good reasons to take to be about real external objects, then, granted other Husserlian premises, this entails content externalism as articulated above.²²

It is clear, albeit not often remarked upon, that the mature Husserl subscribes to all these propositions. With respect to (a), it is one of Husserl’s fundamental claims that all genuinely perceptual presentations present their objects directly, rather than through epistemically mediating items. Indeed, for him this is definitionally true, since he defines (genuine) perception as the (usually only partial or aspectual) *self-giveness* of the phenomenal object (LI 6, §§23, 45). True thoughts articulating the content of ordinary sensory perceptions are for him genuinely perceptual thoughts in this sense. If they did not present their objects in an epistemically direct way, they would have to do so either via signs (symbols) that were, at some stage, arbitrarily chosen to stand for these objects, or via ‘images’ or ‘pictures’ (*Bilder*) taken as resembling their objects.²³ But nothing can function as a sign or as a pictorial representation of an object for me unless it is taken (*aufgefasst*) or used as such (*sich seiner*

to be. They would not be thoughts co-constituted by real external objects but by non-real, quasi-hallucinatory objects. But the actual obtaining of such a scenario, for which there is no evidence, is only coherently conceivable if the real (not merely logical) possibility of a future disconfirmation of our current perceptual beliefs by veridical external perceptions has been provided for, however currently unavailable such veridical perceptions may be. If such disconfirmation of current perceptual beliefs by future experience were not really possible, the idea that all our current perceptions are non-veridical would be ‘counter-sensical’ (*widersinnig*). What is thus, according to Husserl, a priori impossible is the sheer non-existence of a real external world, although its future ‘annihilation’ is certainly conceivable.

²² The additional premises are: there can only be illusory perceptions or hallucinations concerning an apparent external world if veridical external perceptions are really possible (see n. 21); and, necessarily, some perceptions as of external objects are belief-involving (see n. 31).

²³ Some interpreters maintain that Husserl recognizes a further kind of indirect representation, namely representation by way of mediating ‘abstract’ (ideal) entities, analogous to Fregean senses.

bedient) by me (LI 5, appendix to §§11 and 20, II/1, pp. 421–5/II, pp. 125–8). Husserl insists that what is characteristic of the articulated content of ordinary sense perception is precisely that it is *not* taken in this way, and that it is, on the contrary, sharply distinguished from the awareness or conscious use of something as a sign or as a representational image (see below).

If genuine perception is defined as the mode of intentional consciousness which presents its object without epistemic intermediaries, this entails that its content is most adequately expressed by the use of demonstrative expressions like ‘this’. Although Husserl only explicitly acknowledges this consequence in later writings, he already articulates the reasons for it in *Logical Investigations*. In the perceptual use of demonstratives, only ‘the actual circumstances of utterance’ *themselves* suffice to give the expression a determinate sense (LI 1, §26, II/1, p. 81/I, p. 218), for demonstratives, unlike non-indexical symbols, here necessarily refer to the object ‘directly (that is, without any attributive mediation)’ (LI 6, §5, II/2, p. 19/II, p. 198). The last point implies that no image, sense datum, or other representational item can stand for the object in perceptual demonstrative thought, for if it did, the reference to the object would *have* to be ‘attributively mediated’, for example through a definite description like ‘the F-thing causing this sense datum’. Phenomenologically, perceptual demonstrative thoughts establish a direct contact with the object referred to, and *this is why* ‘without the perception . . . the pointing would be empty, without determinate differentiation, *in concreto* not even possible’ (LI 6, §5, II/2 pp. 18–19/II p. 198).²⁴ In successful sense perception, then,

Indeed, according to this reading, for Husserl *all* representations are epistemically mediated in this way. I believe that this interpretation is erroneous. For further discussion of it, see n. 50.

²⁴ In *Logical Investigations*, the point that complete demonstrative senses involve the objects referred to themselves is obscured by, and indeed in tension with, the idea of sense data (later called *hyle*) which are supposedly *reell* immanent in intentional experiences and, while not themselves being intentional objects, allegedly serve as ‘representative contents’ necessary for reference to the perceptual object (see also *Id 1*, §85). This idea of psychically immanent sense data is one of the philosophically most problematic aspects of Husserl’s early and middle-period thinking. The kind of considerations that he thinks require such non-intentional sense data in fact only point to variations in the way a perceived *object* may *appear* which are neither variations in the perceived object nor variations in the ‘intentional essence’ of the experience (e.g. the appearance of the surface colour of an object may vary depending on the lighting conditions, without either the object having changed or the subject changing his perceptual belief regarding the object’s colour; see *Id 2*, §15c, p. 41; and §18a, pp. 57–9). For criticisms of Husserl’s conception of non-intentional hyletic data, see Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness*, 265–73; and Drummond, *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-foundational Realism*, 63–70, 144–6. Immanent hyletic data are abandoned in Husserl’s later thought from around 1928, which in this regard squares more easily with the theory of perceptual demonstratives sketched in *Logical Investigations* (see Sokolowski, *The Formation of Husserl’s Concept of Constitution*, 177–80,

we make precisely such direct contact with worldly objects, so that it makes no sense to speak of the content of sense perception as we actually enjoy it without adverting to the worldly objects presumptively presented in it.

What is it that establishes this contact? To put the question slightly differently: what *enables* the expression ‘this’, in its perceptual demonstrative use, to refer to some worldly object without ‘attributive mediation’? Husserl’s answer is that what establishes referential contact with a perceptually presented item, and what therefore essentially underpins the knowledgeable use of demonstrative signs, is conscious perceptual *attention* (*EJ*, §§17–18; *Id 1*, §§35, 37). In accordance with his ‘principle of principles’, the relevant notion of attention can of course not be merely a functionalist one, along the lines of ‘whatever selects items of information from the perceptual field for further cognitive processing at the personal level’²⁵ but must itself be cashed in phenomenological terms—as a structure of experience. While I cannot go into the details of Husserl’s extensive phenomenological analysis of selective perceptual attention here, let me briefly mention three of its features that are central in the present context. First, selective attention is a focussing of consciousness upon some part of a pre-attentive perceptual field. Pre-attentive or ‘background’ consciousness is not simply a ‘chaos of sensations’, but rather presents a field which has a phenomenal structure or contour—there are, among other features, *qualitative contrasts* in it, our pre-attentive consciousness of which may make us ‘turn towards’ them (*zuwenden*)—i.e. they draw our attention to them (*EJ*, §16). Thus, the ‘passively pre-given’ perceptual field is neither completely devoid of conscious intentionality, nor is it ‘inner’, unlike its deeply problematic counterpart in Husserl’s

204–11). In Husserl’s most detailed later account of perceptual content, in *Experience and Judgement*, psychically immanent hyletic data have been replaced by a noematic, consistently non-immanentist, account of ‘the given’ (*EJ*, §§16–17).

²⁵ The adoption of such a broad functionalist conception of attention is one problem with John Campbell’s original development of the Husserlian-sounding thesis that we should be ‘taking demonstrative reference to be a phenomenon of attention’ (Campbell, ‘Sense, Reference and Selective Attention’, 73). If we mean by attention nothing more specific than ‘selection of information for further processing’ (p. 57), the claim becomes virtually vacuous. However, the notion of attention in play in Campbell’s later *Reference and Consciousness* does seem to be a phenomenological notion and his argument in that work is to that extent analogous to Husserl’s, although the latter would no doubt object to its particular way of linking intentional, personal-level, and subpersonal levels of description. For example, Campbell’s claim (p. 28) that through conscious attention *we* select unconscious information-processing routines would be unacceptable to Husserl. While conscious attention supervenes on whatever causes such procedures to come into operation, what *we* select by means of attention is not *them* but some aspect of the environment being attended to.

earlier account of intentionality, namely ‘hyletic data’ or ‘sensation’ (*EJ*, §13, p. 64/62). Rather, the pre-attentive perceptual field is simply some part of the (phenomenal) *world* as it affects us prior to our taking notice of it. Thus what is essential to the phenomenon of attention is a *foreground–background* structure of consciousness.²⁶ Secondly, attention is an *activity* of the subject. It is, as Husserl puts it partly by invoking Kantian terminology, the most basic form of ego-activity, spontaneity at work within receptivity (*EJ*, §17). Thirdly, through the activity of attention the ego consciously directs itself towards (*zuwendet*) and thematizes some part or aspect of the passively pre-given perceptual field, thereby making it possible for *objects* to become ‘constituted’ for—i.e. to be consciously representable by—it. Selective attention is thus a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition for the individuation of intentional objects.²⁷

But is Husserl right to claim that when an object is directly presented (‘self-given’), as in sense perception, the object itself enters into the content of the intentional experience? Might not the content of, for example, the sensory perception of a particular object be *both* epistemically direct *and* adequately characterizable without adverting to a relation, attentional or otherwise, to that very object itself? An opponent might argue that the correct way to articulate the content of the direct perception of a particular is not, say, ‘this is spherical’, but: ‘there is now one object straight in front of me which is spherical.’ While this still contains occasion-dependent components, the object itself is characterized entirely in general terms, involving a numerical property, an ontological category (*object*), a relational property (*straight in front of x*), and a perceptible intrinsic property (*spherical*). But we must ask: how are these *general* contents, which supposedly supply the object-constituting components of the perception, supposed to be grasped, if perception is to be a *direct* presentation of a particular object? If they themselves were grasped indirectly, for example through linguistic symbols, they obviously would not be suitable as essential core-constituents of *perceptual* content in Husserl’s sense at all, since the object would then not be

²⁶ For the use of unthematic (background) consciousness, or pre-attentive conscious processing, in empirical cognitive psychology, see e.g. Neisser, *Cognitive Psychology*, ch. 4.

²⁷ Could someone not demonstratively identify an object without conscious attention? Sean Kelly suggests that a blindsighter might gradually learn through feedback that her guesses about her environment are generally reliable and that these guesses might then count as knowledge (‘Reference and Attention’, 283–4). Husserl would of course respond that such inference-based knowledge would not be *perceptual* and could not possibly be our fundamental way of knowledgeably individuating objects.

self-given through these general contents. So, for this account as an account of genuinely perceptual content even to get off the ground, the general contents would *themselves* have to be perceived.²⁸ But, leaving aside the objection that such a perception would also not be appropriately expressed (as proposed) by an existentially quantified proposition, Husserl insists, very plausibly, that *if* universals such as sensory properties are perceptible, they are so only in intentional experiences which are ‘founded on’ the simultaneous intuitive presence, in perception or imagination, of actual or possible particulars exemplifying them (*LI 2*, §§1–4; *EJ*, §§87–8). If a perception of general contents is possible, it therefore *presupposes* an intuitive acquaintance with particulars, and it thus cannot itself be our basic mode of access to such particulars. Consequently, if the direct perception of external objects were to be analysed in this manner, it could not be our *fundamental* way of consciously representing external particulars.

However, as against this latter idea, Husserl also concurs with (b): direct, perceptual presentations of external objects *are* fundamental such that, necessarily, thoughts about external particulars would not be available at all without them. This is a thought that is familiar from current discussions of the foundational role of perception for conscious representation of a spatio-temporal world. For example, Bill Brewer has argued, developing a point originally made by P. F. Strawson, that without perceptual demonstrative thought that picks out environmental objects directly, there could be no thoughts about particulars at all. For the only form of linguistic reference to particulars that is not straightforwardly dependent on perceptual demonstratives is pure definite descriptions. But for any true pure definite description, no matter how complex, it is conceivable that it should be satisfied by more than one thing. It is conceptually and epistemically possible that there should be a twin world symmetrical with this world in which every particular is duplicated down to the minutest detail. But if it is thus possible, for any pure definite description applying to a particular, and for all the subject can tell, that the description should be satisfied by more than one particular, then such

²⁸ It might be objected here that what is needed is not that the general properties in question *themselves* are perceived, but only that *exemplifications* or instances of them are. However, the perception of a property-exemplification is not a representation of a *general* content at all. The form of such a perception is that of a perception as of a particular: ‘*this* is an instance of sphericalness.’ But if the point of the objection is merely that we should articulate the content of ordinary sense perception along the lines of ‘there is one exemplification of sphericalness straight in front of me’, then the criticisms made above in the text have not been addressed at all.

descriptions cannot be a rational subject's fundamental way of referring to any one particular at all, even if the possibility of global duplication *fails* to be actualized.²⁹

While the Strawson–Brewer thought experiment shows *that* pure definite descriptions cannot play a foundational role in thought about particulars, it does not *explain* why this should be so. Now, the later Husserl reaches the same conclusion,³⁰ but by a quite different route which does explain why perceptions of particulars with object-involving contents are constitutively fundamental for any thought about a real external world. Husserl's reflections illuminate what it is about conscious, personal-level thought that makes such perceptions necessarily basic, and other forms of representation, such as definite descriptions, asymmetrically dependent upon them. His point of departure is that all personal-level representation of objects requires a vehicle or bearer with phenomenal properties (*LI* 6, §§25, 26, 58). We can classify different generic ways of consciously relating in thought to objects, in terms of their types of vehicles. There are, Husserl argues, three such possible generic ways. We may, first, have objects directly, perceptually, presented to us such that, when we take the contents of these presentations at face value, we take the object to be *itself* present, without any epistemic intermediary we are taking as standing for it or representing it—in these cases, the object itself is the vehicle of thought. As we have seen, sense perception presents spatial objects in precisely this way, albeit necessarily incompletely. Secondly, we may represent an object by way of other objects we interpret as representations of it, without taking them, 'pre-theoretically' (in the sense defined earlier), as resembling it. This is 'empty', signitive, or symbolic representation, a class which includes all fully linguistically encoded representations. Thirdly, there are representations on the basis of pre-theoretically recognized relevant *similarities* of some representative item distinct from the object represented with that object. The two more specific types of representation by similarity that are important here are imaginative or 'fantasy' representation (*phantasiemäßig*), and pictorial or 'image' representation (*bildlich*).

²⁹ Brewer, *Perception and Reason*, 25–48. Cf. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals*, ch. 1.1, and Quinton, *The Nature of Things*, ch. 1.

³⁰ While in *Logical Investigations* he holds—inconsistently, one may well think—that demonstrative and other indexical contents are in principle, albeit not for us, replaceable by 'objective senses' (*LI* 1, §28), this view is unequivocally abandoned in his later writings: 'all judging about particular individuals (*individuelle Diesheiten*) [is] to a greater or lesser extent bound to the situation where they are directly experienced (*Erfahrung*). This is mostly indicated also linguistically, by the use of demonstratives or other expressions with "occasion-dependent" (*okkasionell*) meanings' (*EJ*, §80, p. 384/319).

With respect to our question regarding external, spatial objects that are ‘transcendent’ to any one intentional experience representing them, Husserl now claims that the two generic types of *indirect* representation of such objects cannot be autonomous, but that they are essentially dependent on the availability of direct, perceptual representations of what we must believe, and have good reasons to believe, to be such objects.³¹ This implies that we could not even *think* about such objects without standing in appropriately direct perceptual relations with items we reasonably take to be such objects. And if this is the case, the phenomenological reduction cannot coherently require us to give up all beliefs that such direct perceptual relations in fact obtain. Without endorsing some such beliefs, the phenomenologist could not coherently investigate any thoughts or representations about external spatial objects at all. This would, at the very least, severely curtail the range of possible phenomenological inquiry and would arguably (see below) render it impossible *tout court*.

In what way are ‘indirect’ representations, such as fully encoded (i.e. non-indexical) linguistic representations of particular spatial objects, necessarily dependent on perceptions? It is the essence of an object-referring symbol that it stands for something else not identical with it, yet *not* by virtue of being taken to be relevantly similar to it. To grasp the sense of such a symbol is, in part, to grasp what it stands for. Such a grasp necessitates knowing what would render a categorical assertion deploying the symbol true, what would conclusively verify it. And knowing *this* requires, for a basic class of cases including representations of external objects,³² being able to encounter or to envisage the verifying object(s) or state(s) of affairs in an ‘intuitively fulfilled’ way (*CM*, §24, p. 93/58), which in most cases is possible only incompletely (e.g. ‘*x* is a house’) or by way of analogies (‘Napoleon crowned himself

³¹ Husserl plausibly maintains that the most fundamental kinds of perceptual representation include a doxic component: a *non-reflective*, and in this sense ‘passive’, *taking* the object to be as it perceptually appears to be. This ‘passive primordial belief’ (*passive Urdoxa*) or ‘simple certainty’ (*EJ*, §21d) may subsequently become modified or neutralized through the experience of conflict or discrepancy among the contents of one’s perceptual experiences (e.g. in perceptual illusions, such as the Müller–Lyer illusion). But his point is that (a) any such modification or questioning of one’s perceptions essentially presupposes the occurrence of *other* perceptual experiences with the ‘thetic’ character he calls *Urdoxa*; and that (b) not all perceptual experiences could simultaneously be devoid of this non-reflective, unquestioning, belief character, or have it cancelled or reflectively suspended. The very possibility of questioning some of my perceptions requires others that remain unquestioned at the time. See *EJ*, §§7–10.

³² For the argument to show that the basic class cannot consist exclusively of ‘inner’ items (mental states), see below.

Emperor'). Symbolic representation is thus only *intelligible* in relation to intuitively fulfilled representations, such as perceptions and imaginations. While it is a moot point whether *all* object-referring symbols need to be cashable in perceptual or imaginative-analogizing ways, if a core repertoire of such symbols were not intuitively fulfillable, then we could not understand anything *as* a symbolic representation at all.

What about imagination (*Phantasie*)? Might it be conceptually possible to entertain thoughts about external objects utilizing, in addition to symbolic representations, only *phantasiemäßige* images? A phenomenological analysis of imagination shows that this is not possible. Husserl argues that imagination is closely analogous to 'thetic' or 'positing', i.e. belief-involving, 'presentifications' (*Vergegenwärtigungen*), of which imagistic memory is a paradigm case. But just as the thetic component in sense perception is neutralized in the awareness of something *as* a perceptual illusion, so imagining is a form of presentifying something absent where the belief component of episodic memory is lacking (*Id 1*, §111). While in imagistic memory I recollect not just some past event, but also *witnessing* that event, in imagination I imagine some intentional object 'as if' it were seen, or believed, or desired (in the light of some belief), etc., from the conscious perspective of some, perhaps indeterminate, subject. Thus there is in imagination a 'reference' to, and dependence on, other, and ultimately on 'thetic' modes of conscious representation, such as sense perception or pictorially fulfilled belief (although this dependence may be indirect, as when I imagine someone else imagining being present at the battle of Salamis). Moreover, it is *constitutive* of imagination that the 'images' it involves should be *experienced as clashing* with perceptual representations, and thus as 'occluding... something in reality' (*HUA 23*, appendix 51, p. 485). Yet this occlusion is only ever incomplete and the perceptual world clashing with the imagined contents nevertheless remains 'continually present' to consciousness, it only 'nearly disappears' and remains poised *aktuell* to impinge upon me as soon as my imaginative activity slackens. Wherever this *experienced* conflict with current perceptual experience is lacking, we are no longer dealing with *Phantasie*, but with hallucination (*HUA 23*, §20, pp. 42–3). But even ignoring these points, fantasy images could not possibly suffice to give appropriate intuitive fulfilment to verbal thoughts about real particulars. What individuates a real particular is its objective spatio-temporal position (*EJ*, §40, p. 203/173; §91, p. 430/355). An imagined material object or state of affairs involving such objects has as such not even a determinate position in objective time (*EJ*, §39, p. 197/169) without

which localization in objective space is not possible (*EJ*, §38, p. 191/164–5). Thus ‘fantasy’ images cannot individuate real particulars: ‘here there is no possibility for speaking of several [qualitatively identical] objects or of the same singular object merely repeatedly represented’ (*EJ*, §39, p. 197/169).

If symbolic, including linguistic, representation and imagination do not suffice to enable thoughts about real external particulars, might we improve the situation by adding *picture-like* representation? According to indirect realism as classically stated by Locke, ordinary sense perception is of this kind.³³ We have already seen that Husserl rejects indirect realism as an account of our actual sensory awareness of the world. But is it not at least *conceivable* that our fundamental mode of thought about external objects should be *bildlich*? No, for it is constitutive for pictorial (as opposed to imaginative) representation that some features of a perceived object are taken as representing another object distinct from it by virtue of resemblance, as we can see paradigmatically in painting or in film images. If one construed the foundational perception as *itself* pictorial, this would lead to an infinite regress (*LI* 5, appendix to §§11 and 20, II/1, p. 423/II, p. 126). Moreover, every conscious taking or using an item as a pictorial image (without which it could not *be* such an image at all) necessarily involves an awareness of a discrepancy between the space occupied by the physical thing that functions as the bearer of the representation, and the quasi-space within the representation (*HUA* 23, no. 1, §14, esp. pp. 32–3). Thus, like imaginative representation of spatial particulars, pictorial representation of them is essentially dependent upon direct perceptual representation. And since not all of a subject’s perceptual experiences could be devoid of the doxic character of non-reflective belief, which simply takes the object to be as it perceptually appears to be, it follows that there could be no thoughts about real, external, spatial things without beliefs that there are such things.

It might be objected that the argument just given leaves open the possibility that the directly perceived objects serving as the bearers of the pictorial representation might have quite different properties from those of the objects represented (as they do to some extent in the Lockean version of indirect realism), and thus pictorial thoughts about a world of external objects might still be possible without having perceptually based beliefs about many, or

³³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 8, esp. sections 8, 15, 16.

perhaps any, of the fundamental properties of those objects. However, an item can only function as the bearer of pictorial representations if it allows for the exemplification of properties that are appropriately similar to those of the target objects. Therefore no perceptual item can successfully serve as a *Bild* of causally effective, relatively persisting, three-dimensional spatial things without itself exemplifying persistence and causal efficacy, and having spatial features. The phenomenological reduction therefore cannot, on Husserl's own terms, require the philosopher to regard all perception-based beliefs about real spatial objects as dispensable, and it consequently cannot coherently be intended as a 'Cartesian', internalist manoeuvre. We should therefore take Husserl seriously when he says:

It is a matter of course, presupposed by all scientific thought *and all philosophical questions*, that the world exists . . . Objective science also only poses its questions on the basis of this world that always exists in advance, in pre-scientific life. Science presupposes the world's being, just like all *praxis* does. (*Crisis*, §28, pp. 112–13/110; emphasis mine)

Could the phenomenological philosopher even thematize *herself* qua subject of experience ('transcendental' or otherwise), or her experiences and their structures, without remaining committed to beliefs about a real external world? Husserl explicitly denies this: 'Reality and subjectivity . . . essentially require each other' (*Id 2*, §30b, p. 64/69). 'Real' objects, in Husserl's terminology, are objects having a non-egocentric spatio-temporal location and causal properties (*Id 2*, §15, esp. pp. 41–5/44–9). Thinking of oneself as a subject, or having the concept of an experience, is only possible on the basis of warranted beliefs about a real, external world in this sense (*Id 2*, §47, p. 170/179). Even in an early text like *Logical Investigations*, where some of the issues relevant here are obscured by his implausible assumption of *reell* immanent sense data, Husserl says unequivocally that 'all act-characters are ultimately founded on external sensory contents' (*LI 6*, §58, II/2 pp. 179–80/II p. 304; see also *EJ*, §29, p. 153/139). A subject cannot entertain contents of empirical reflection ('inner objects') at all without having had intentional experiences in which some item has been presented as empirically external in the Kantian sense, that is, as having spatial (and causal) properties.³⁴ Why should this be so? From the many scattered considerations

³⁴ For Kant's conception of empirically external object as essentially spatial, see *Critique of Pure Reason*, esp. A23/B37–B30/B45, and A367–A380.

offered by Husserl in support of this view, I here want to reconstruct two lines of argument.

First, thinking of myself as a subject of intentional experiences implies the ability to think about intentional experiences as such. But I evidently cannot think about experiences *as* intentional experiences without being able to distinguish them from that which they are experiences *of*—from their conscious ('intentional') objects. But what is it to think of something as an *object* of consciousness? We can paraphrase Husserl's conception of an intentional object as follows:

Intentional Object (Def.): X is a conscious, or intentional, object for a subject S at time t just in case (a) S at t is conscious of X through an experience E₁, and (b) S at t has the ability become conscious of X again, without modifying it, in other experiences E₂, E₃, . . . , differing in respect of their qualitative (noetic) moments, and (c) S at t has the ability to become thus conscious of X *as the same* across these different experiences of it (see esp. *EJ*, §13; also *HUA* 26, pp. 49–53, pp. 62–9).

Consciously represented physical things, phantoms, fictional individuals, properties, states of affairs, and experiences as thought about, all fall under this broad Husserlian understanding of objecthood. Being able to represent an item as identically the same across different experiences of it is essential to the concept of an object of consciousness. Representing something as an object therefore necessarily involves the ability to represent it as actually or potentially *absent*—as not currently 'self-given' in, for example, sense perception. The thought here is that, if I could *only* become conscious of X when actually perceiving it, I would not yet have 'objectified' it, for I would not be able to *re-cognize* it, on later perceptual encounters with it, as the same X that was perceived earlier. But the very possibility of thinking of a particular item as currently absent, as not directly intuited, in turn requires a capacity to think of it as being *somewhere else* in time or space.³⁵ It thus requires more than the egocentric, or *purely* perspectival, conception of time and space which is characteristic of sense perception, in which items are given as (implicitly)

³⁵ There are of course representations of absent intentional objects which do not represent them as being in another spatio-temporal location. I can imagine or entertain verbal thoughts about, say, unicorns. But, as we saw, Husserl plausibly holds that any such 'non-thetic' representations are possible only on the basis of there being a class of perceptual representations at least some of the contents of which must be 'passively' taken at face value, as really being thus-and-so (*EJ*, §§7–10). Hence the very concept of an intentional object is tied to that of 'thetic' perception.

relative to the subject—as ‘now’ or ‘earlier’ (*Time*, A, §§10, 17), or as ‘here’, ‘in front’, ‘to the left’, ‘up’, and so forth (*Id 2*, §§41a, 42).³⁶ What is needed for the conscious representation of an object is thus a non-egocentric, and in this (weak) sense objective, conception of time and space which allows the subject to think about an item as *retaining its own position* in time or space even when it is not currently perceived or experienced by the subject. It is its occupying such a position that individuates an item as a particular (*EJ*, §91, p. 430/355; §43b, p. 219/186). But the idea of an item as itself occupying a determinate spatio-temporal position in a non-egocentric, objective, frame of reference implies the notion of its having *causal properties*. Only in so far it has dispositions causally to affect and be affected by other items external to it can it actually ‘fill’ or ‘occupy’ its *own* spatio-temporal position. It is such causal properties that essentially distinguish a real external thing from a spatial phantom (*Id 2*, §15b-c, pp. 36–45/39–48). While there are meaningful questions about spatial phantoms which allow for true or false answers (*Id 2*, §15b, p. 36/39), such appearances have no objective (non-egocentric) spatial location, and even the ascription to them of a position in objective time *presupposes* their being conceived as occurring in some subject’s experiential history. Hence they cannot be part of the constitutive story explicating the conditions that make the conception of such a subject and its experiences possible in the first place.

Husserl now argues that a subject’s conception of an intentional object as *real*—as having causal properties—essentially requires thinking of it as potentially *interacting with the subject*. This in turn is conditional upon the subject’s being able to think of *itself* as a real object—to objectify itself as ‘the point of intersection of real causalities’ (*Id 2*, §18, pp. 62–5/67–70). This ‘intersection’ is experienced paradigmatically in *perceptions* as of particulars which normally, unless there are special reasons to the contrary, are, and must be, taken (*aufgefasst*) by the subject as a being-affected by the object (*LI 5*, §27, II/1 pp. 442–3/II pp. 137–8; *EJ*, §§7, 17), and in spontaneous, self-moving *action*—as Husserl puts it: in the experience of the ‘I do’ (*Id 2*, §18, p. 58/63; §15, p. 39/42; §38).

What are the reasons behind Husserl’s claim that only a worldly, ‘mundane’ subject—a subject that represents itself (objectifies itself) as a *part* of the real world and as interacting with it—can have a conception of such a

³⁶ Apparently monadic egocentric manners of presentation—e.g. ‘x is to the right’—are implicitly relational. Cf. Campbell, ‘Joint Attention and the First Person’, 128–31.

world at all? It seems clear that it is motivated by an application of his view that a conception of any property that is constitutively fundamental for the conscious representation of a world—such as the property *being a cause*—presupposes an acquaintance or imaginative quasi-acquaintance with something exemplifying the property. If one holds the view, for which there are strong independent reasons, that the concept of causality is not just that of functional co-variation, but that something like the idea of *efficacy* or causal power is needed to capture the priority of the cause relative to the effect, then Husserl's claim about the necessary self-mundanization of the subject follows, assuming that he *also* holds that the concept of efficacy or causal power is only 'intuitively fulfillable' in a subject's purposive action on an environment offering resistances to it. There are passages suggesting such a view, although Husserl untypically gives us little detail in this regard:

Impact and pressure cannot strictly be seen, one can only see the spatial and gestalt processes accompanying it. Even through mere touching one cannot experience pressure, traction, or resistance. One has to 'tense the muscles', 'press against it', etc. (Id 2, §15, p. 39/42)³⁷

As this passage indicates, Husserl takes the subject's agency that is implicated in any representation as of real spatial objects as requiring a *phenomenal body*, experienced and conceived of as having causal powers: 'The lived body on the other hand cannot be lacking. Even a ghost necessarily has a ghost's body' (*Id 2*, §21, p. 94/100). We get a clearer picture of what this experience of the causal power of the body involves if we turn to Husserl's second line of argument for the necessary embodiment of subjects. It begins by unfolding the implications of the perspectival character of spatial phenomenal objects. A spatial object cannot even in principle be directly presented to a possible perceiver all at once, but only through profiles which include 'adumbrations' (*Abschattungen*) indicating to the perceiver, sometimes quite indeterminately, the object's other profiles not currently sensorily given—e.g. the back of a house one is currently perceiving (*Id 1*, §§41–42; *EJ*, §§8, 20, 83a). It is only because my perception of the front of the house includes such 'horizontal' characteristics that I can take myself to be perceiving (rather than inferring the presence of) the *house* as opposed to a mere façade. What Husserl calls the

³⁷ Versions of the view adumbrated here were developed in detail by some of Husserl's contemporaries, most influentially by Dilthey and Scheler. (Somewhat earlier, it can also be found in Nietzsche.) See Dilthey, 'Beiträge zur Lösung der Frage vom Ursprung unseres Glaubens an die Realität der Aussenwelt', 90–138; and Scheler, *Erkenntnis und Arbeit*, esp. pp. 237–50.

inner perceptual horizon of an object is to be understood in terms of mostly unthematic, implicit, anticipations (protentions), aroused by adumbrations in what is sensorily given, concerning sides or aspects of the object which are currently not thus given.³⁸ Husserl now argues that the possibility of perceiving different profiles or sides of a spatial object as sides of the *same* particular object, and therefore the possibility of taking a spatial object to *have* currently unperceived sides—without which one could not take it to be a spatial object at all—is conditional upon the possibility of having an awareness of oneself as *moving through* space so as to perceive different profiles of the object in continuous succession (e.g. when walking around the house). But a consciousness of myself as moving through space and thereby potentially gaining perceptual purchase on different parts of objective space (as opposed to the contents of my egocentric space changing) necessitates some system of subjective indices which allow a conscious registering of my movements (*Id 2*, §§18a, 38). Anticipating Gibson’s ‘ecological’ theory of perception, Husserl thus arrives at the idea that spatial perception requires the processing of information not just about the subject’s environment, but also and correlatively about the subject itself.³⁹ In order for this information to be available *to* the subject, it needs, of course, to be consciously registered. Husserl

³⁸ The concept of *horizontal* givenness (‘appresentation’) is one of Husserl’s most important contributions to the analysis of intentionality. In its application to perception, it is the idea that the content of any perceptual experience necessarily includes more than what is explicitly presented in it (*CM*, §§19–20). Horizontal appresentation is *sui generis*. It must not be confused with imaginative representation. I do not *imagine* the back of the house when I perceive it *as* having a back while looking at its front (*TS*, §18). But it is also quite wrong to think of the Husserlian horizon as a *hypothesis* or a *belief* about something not sensorily given in an experience (*pace* Kelly, ‘Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty’, 79–80). For one thing, if horizontal characteristics were hypothesized, they would not be part of the *perceptual* content (in Husserl’s sense), and if they were not, one could not ever non-inferentially perceive any particular object, temporal or spatial, at all. But Husserl is emphatic that we do genuinely perceive houses, books, or melodies (e.g. *LI 6*, §47; *EJ*, §22; *Time*, A, §16). Secondly, a hypothesis about a sensorily absent profile would be a predicative judgement, an instance of ‘categorical synthesis’. One of Husserl’s basic claims is that categorical synthesis presupposes ‘simple’ (*schlicht*), non-categorical, sensory syntheses—as when I successively see different sides of a house as sides of the same object when walking round it (*LI 6*, §46). But such continuous sensory synthesis, according to Husserl, is itself only possible because each individual perceptual experience of the object includes horizontal anticipations (*CM*, §19). The latter therefore cannot have a predicative, categorical structure. It follows that they also cannot be explicit, propositionally structured expectations. They are implicit ‘passive protentions’, the presence of most of which necessarily becomes explicit only subsequently, for example when they are being disappointed (when what was originally seen as a house on inspection turns out not to have a back because it was only a stage prop).

³⁹ Cf. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. It should be stressed that Husserl is not claiming that the subject’s awareness of bodily self-movement is *sufficient* for her grasping the idea of a non-egocentric space through which she is moving.

calls these necessary subjective indices of self-movement ‘kinaestheses’. In the case of human subjects, they include such things as the proprioceptive awareness of our eye movements, or the feelings we have of our muscles, joints, and tendons when walking. But they also include experiences of *acting* which, Husserl insists rightly, distinguish voluntary bodily actions from passive or reflex movements potentially involving the same proprioceptive sensations (*Id 2*, §41–2, pp. 159–61/166–9).⁴⁰ These systems of kinaestheses are what Husserl calls the ‘lived body from within’ (*Innenleib*). His claim, then, is that any representation of particular spatial objects by a subject implies the subject’s practical grasp of possible self-movements which would make available different profiles of the object in a continuous sensory synthesis. But for *this* to be possible, there have to be functional correlations between the subject’s systems of kinaesthesia and the sets of object profiles potentially encounterable. I cannot rationally take myself to have actively moved around a house and now to be perceiving the back of it, unless I have experienced, or believe I have experienced, an ordered series of appropriate kinaestheses in correlation with successive object profiles.⁴¹

Now since, as we saw above, a conception of myself as interacting with real spatial objects requires me also to *objectify* myself—to think of myself qua causal agent as a spatial object—it is necessary that the kinaestheses

⁴⁰ While for Husserl intentional bodily action essentially involves experiences of acting, it is false to claim, as Hubert Dreyfus does, that this commits him to the idea that such action is characterized by a Jamesian ‘feeling of effort’, or that when engaged in such action the subject thematically represents her own intentions (see Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 54–9). Presumably even John Searle, whom Dreyfus rather freely interprets as holding a Husserlian theory of action, and who believes that the content of intentional action includes a reference to the respective intention-in-action itself (cf. John Searle, *Intentionality*, 83–98), would not say that there is a *consciously* explicit self-reference of this kind in all intentional action (cf. *Intentionality*, 92). But whatever Searle’s view may be, Husserl is absolutely clear that the kinaestheses are, in normal skilled action, *unthematic*—they are given in the mode of *background* consciousness (*EJ*, §19, p. 89/84). Consequently, *pace* Dreyfus, the experience of acting cannot by Husserl’s lights be an *object* of consciousness in such standard skilled actions. While Dreyfus paints something of a caricature of Husserl, there are genuine, and important, differences on this issue between Husserl’s actual position and Dreyfus’s Heidegger: (1) Husserl insists that there are unthematic experiences of acting which distinguish absorbed active self-movement from passive or reflex behaviour (see Poellner, ‘Non-conceptual Content, Experience and the Self’, 48–51, for a defence of this claim). (2) For Husserl, any absorbed skilled use and awareness of equipment in terms of its instrumental features (its ‘available’ or ‘practical’ characteristics; cf. *EJ*, §14, p. 68/65–6) presupposes a prior thematic acquaintance with it, or with items of its type, in terms of some of its non-instrumental sensible features (see *Id 1*, §37; *Id 2*, §4, p. 10/12; §8; *EJ*, §18). If he is right on this, it follows that ‘absorbed coping with equipment’ in Dreyfus’s sense cannot be the fundamental form of conscious intentionality.

⁴¹ For detailed discussion, see Drummond, ‘On Seeing a Material Thing in Space’, 19–32. Also Claesges, *Edmund Husserls Theorie der Raumkonstitution*.

which comprise my subjective self-movement should be ascribable by myself to this spatial object. Thus, for Husserl, the possibility of a consciousness as of real spatial objects necessitates a *twofold* bodily self-consciousness. I need to experience myself kinaesthetically as *Innenleib*, but also to be able to think of these kinaestheses as pertaining to, and *located in*, a physical object. It thus emerges that, for Husserl, possession of the very concept of a subject of experience ultimately involves a self-conception as an embodied spatial agent in interaction with real spatial objects.⁴² To put it differently: the ego, considered in its transcendental role in the phenomenological reduction, must *eo ipso* be considered as *necessarily* ‘objectifying itself’ as an embodied being *within* the phenomenal world (*Crisis*, §54b): ‘Clearly it belongs to the essence of the world that is transcendently constituted in me . . . that it is, by virtue of essential necessity, also a world of humans [i.e. of socialized embodied beings]’ (*CM*, §56; p. 158/130).

How plausible are these Husserlian transcendental-phenomenological claims? It should be uncontentious that the subject of consciousness is not thinkable without reference to its intentional experiences, and the latter cannot be individuated without reference to their contents. And it is indeed difficult to see how a subject should be able to objectify itself as an entity which, through having experiences, is enabled to interact with the world, without thinking of both itself and the world in something closely analogous to spatial concepts.⁴³ Husserl is clearly also correct in insisting that a subject can have no such self-conception without conceptualizing itself as a source of *agency*.

⁴² David Bell, who claims that the Husserl of *Ideas I* operates with a conception of a disembodied transcendental subject, interprets his analysis of bodily intentionality as marking a significant departure from this earlier putative Cartesianism (*Husserl*, 207–14 and 250, n. 8). However, the textual facts are not easily squared with this line of interpretation. Husserl offers his first and most detailed description of the necessarily body-involving nature of spatial perception in the lectures on *Ding und Raum* in 1907. Similar analyses are also prominent in the material that was used for *Ideas II*, dating mainly from 1912–15. It is just not credible that Husserl simply should not have noticed the incompatibility of these thoughts in his lectures and manuscripts with the conception of a disembodied subject which is said to figure, more or less simultaneously, in *Ideas I* (1913). A more plausible interpretive strategy is surely to relinquish the conventional reading of Husserl as having been a Cartesian in the relevant sense at the time of *Ideas I*. In fact, even in that text Husserl states that the concept of a soul is ‘founded on’, i.e. necessarily dependent upon, the concept of a real object (*Id I*, §17).

⁴³ What is the force of ‘closely analogous’ here? It is intended to exclude, for one thing, Strawson’s conception of a universe of purely temporal, auditory, objects (P. F. Strawson, *Individuals*, ch. 2). It is difficult to attach any clear sense to, say, the supposition of a subject objectifying itself by thinking of itself as being, or being somehow united with, such a purely temporal object, and to its thus being enabled to think of itself as interacting with other real, but similarly purely temporal, subjects.

What is more problematic, however, is his ‘absent profiles’ argument for the thesis that such a self-conception ultimately depends on the possibility of bodily, kinaesthetically indicated, self-movement. Why should a subject only be able to think of, or perceive, an object as having other, currently unperceived, aspects which could be perceived from other perspectives, if it can also understand itself, practically or otherwise, as potentially *moving* to take up those other perspectives? This does not seem to be an a priori truth. There might conceivably be subjects who, while embodied, are paralysed from birth and cannot experience or think of themselves as actively moving through space at all, and who might yet take their surrounding world to consist of spatial particulars with aspects unperceived by them, but perceivable from somewhere else.⁴⁴ After all, in the parallel temporal case, we can uncontroversially think of events having objective *temporal* properties (e.g. Napoleon studying his maps for one hour on the eve of the battle of Jena) which we can neither directly witness, nor gain any clear conception of what it would be to ‘move ourselves’ to a temporal position from which we could witness them.⁴⁵ The claim about the role of bodily self-movement thus seems to be one instance where Husserl does not so much analyse the constitutive conditions for *any* subject’s having representations of a certain (here: spatial) type, but rather the way in which certain kinds of subjects, namely humans, in fact represent the world thus. Husserl’s claims to the contrary notwithstanding, this is arguably not part of a transcendental story valid with ‘strict universality’, but of a phenomenology of the specifically *human* world.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cf. G. Strawson, *Mental Reality*, ch. 9. Alva Noë’s *Action in Perception* is a sustained recent defence of the essentially Husserlian thesis that ‘a perceiver’s ability to perceive is constituted (in part) by sensorimotor knowledge, i.e. by a practical grasp of the way sensory stimulation varies as the perceiver moves’ (p. 12; also p. 95). But Noë’s arguments do not substantiate such a strong constitutive claim since they tend to rely on empirical hypotheses about the cognitive abilities and limitations of specifically human or animal perceivers (the phenomenon of sensory fatigue, among others, pp. 13–15). Even if one accepts that a grasp of the possibility of *movement* is essential for perceiving a spatial object as having aspects currently occluded or outwith focal attention, why should this have to include *self-movement*, rather than merely movement of the *object* (e.g. pp. 87–90)? An additional argument would be needed to show that an understanding of object-movement necessitates a grasp of possible self-movement.

⁴⁵ Kant suggested influentially that objective time determinations of this kind depend on representations of spatial objects (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 274–B279). But I cannot see that his point, if accepted, does anything to undermine the temporal case as a counter-example against Husserl’s transcendental claim about the necessity of bodily self-movement for the representation of spatial particulars.

⁴⁶ Cf. A. D. Smith, *Husserl and the ‘Cartesian Meditations’*, 121–5.

Despite the failure of the ‘absent profiles’ argument *qua* transcendental proof, Husserl’s central point about the necessary twofold bodily self-presentation of the subject as kinaesthetically experienced *Innenleib* and as a spatial object in which the kinaestheses are located may still be vindicated if it can be shown that the very idea of an *interaction* with the physical world requires not only the subject’s self-conceptualization as object, but also her non-conceptual kinaesthetic self-awareness as *Innenleib*. As we have seen, Husserl broaches this thought (*Id 2*, §15, 39/42), but he does not develop it.

4. AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

It should be clear from the arguments so far that the phenomenological reduction is not the misguided methodological device of a Cartesian content internalist. We should take seriously Husserl’s consistent protestations that what comes (logically) first in the phenomenologist’s investigations, having performed the reduction, is the ‘simply [i.e. pre-categorially] given life-world’ (*Crisis*, §50, p. 175/172), that in the phenomenological attitude this life-world ‘remains in its own essence what it previously was’ (*Crisis*, §50, p.177/174), and that in the attitude shift of the *epoché* the philosopher ‘loses nothing of its [the natural world’s] being and its objective truths, and indeed none of the mental acquisitions of his life in the world’ (*Crisis*, §41, pp. 154–5/152; cf. *Id 1*, §§50, 88).

But if the phenomenological reduction is not a Cartesian manoeuvre, what is it and what does it *positively* do? Some formulations suggest that what the reduction makes possible is a conscious reference to—as Husserl would say, a thematizing of—the *sense* or mode of presentation in which a given object is presented. Any intentional object involving an actual or possible particular, with whatever ‘noetic’ quality it is presented in an intentional episode (whether it is imagined, perceived, judged, desired, etc.), is necessarily presented under some aspect or mode of presentation, *as such-and-such*, or from such-and-such a point of view. Husserl calls this mode of presentation of the object the *sense* (*Sinn*) of the intentional experience in question. Thus he can speak, for instance, not only of the sense of a linguistic presentation such as a sentence token, but also of the sense of a perception (*Wahrnehmungssinn*). Indeed, given the basic role of perceptual representation, this is a logically

more fundamental application of the concept of *Sinn* than its application to language. The *sense* of the perception of an apple tree in bloom in the garden is, in a minimal interpretation, *the tree just as it is perceived*, that is, from a certain angle, distance, with a certain seen shape, a certain apparent play upon its leaves of light and shade, and so forth (*Id 1*, §88). Husserl sometimes characterizes the phenomenological reduction is essentially no more than an unprejudiced, ‘theory’-free thematization of—an attending to—the sense of an intentional experience, the way in which whatever is presented becomes conscious in it (*ibid.*). What the phenomenologist should investigate is the ‘sense’ of both the noetic (experiential) and the noematic (intentional content) components of intentional life, and their essential correlations (cf. *Crisis*, §50). But while this formulation is in some respects correct, there are pitfalls here. To begin with, the notion of sense is originally introduced by Husserl to capture the aspectual mode of givenness of intentional objects (*LI 1*, §§12–15). This notion therefore applies naturally to the noematic component of intentional experiences, but not to the noetic, experiential component. Husserl, despite some prevarications, ultimately believes that the noetic moment of an intentional experience (its being a perceiving, desiring, etc.) is itself not an intentional *object* of consciousness in its fundamental mode of presentation, namely when the experience is actually pre-reflectively ‘lived through’ (*erlebt*) (*Id 1*, §38, p. 67/78; §45; *Time*, A, appendices 6, 9, 12).⁴⁷ If the phenomenologist is to describe faithfully ‘what is given as it is given’, she must take appropriate account of this *pre-objective* aspect of experience as it is actually lived. She thus needs a notion of sense which is broader than Husserl’s official definition of it, one which does not tie it quite so directly to the concept of an intentional object—she needs to understand ‘sense’ roughly as the experienced phenomenal character of whatever may be present to consciousness, whether that is an intentional object or not.

Secondly, the phenomenological thematization of *Sinn* should not be understood as analogous to the Fregean change of the reference of an expression when it occurs in quotation marks or in oblique contexts. In such

⁴⁷ This was clearly recognized by some early readers of Husserl, but not by others. For an insightful interpretation, see J-P. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, 41–5. An influential early misunderstanding of Husserl as holding that experiences, when ‘lived through’, are immanent objects, is found in M. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 102–7. Among those who have followed Heidegger on this point is Tugendhat (*Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, 208–11). For criticisms of this reading, see Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 67–82; and Poellner ‘Non-conceptual Content, Experience and the Self’, 45–56.

contexts, the expression refers not to its normal referent, but to its normal *Sinn*, which for Frege is an ideal ('abstract'), self-subsisting, non-spatio-temporal entity ontologically distinct from its referent.⁴⁸ I suggest that Husserl's talk about sense cannot at the fundamental level (and indeed not at *any* level) be understood in this Fregean manner. Leaving aside other problems with the Fregean approach for the moment (but see note 50 below), it is clear that if interpreted in this way, Husserl's phenomenological reduction would, even in its initial move, 'lose the world' of particulars, and the phenomenologist would not actually make direct evidential contact with the spatio-temporal world at all. But it is clear that the move towards the consideration of essences or other universals (the 'eidetic' reduction) is for Husserl a 'founded' accomplishment, *presupposing* the transcendental reduction made possible by the *epoché* and quite distinct from it (cf. *HUA* 24 p. 224; also *Crisis* §52, p. 181/178), and moreover presupposing the phenomenologist's continuing to have some exemplifying or instantiating *particular* intuitively or imitatively present to her.⁴⁹ Husserl, unlike Frege, is precisely *not* a Platonist, for he does not believe that universal (ideal) items, whether they be sensory properties, categorial features, or objectified concepts, can in principle be directly encountered or 'grasped' by themselves (rather than perceived *in* and *through* actual or imagined particulars exemplifying or instantiating them).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ G. Frege, 'The Thought', 307–8. For an interpretation of Husserl along these lines, see David Bell, *Husserl*, 184–8.

⁴⁹ Although Husserl's conception of the details of the process of eidetic intuition—the perception of universals—changes significantly from the early *Logical Investigations* (see *LI* 2, §§1–4) to the late *Experience and Judgement* (*EJ*, §§87–8), what remains constant is the claim that any such perception presupposes the continued intuitive (or imitative) presence of particulars exemplifying (or instantiating) the relevant universals during this process. With respect to concepts and propositionally structured senses, the matter is complicated by the fact that he recognizes, after *Logical Investigations*, that our 'grasping' of these is not adequately understood as the *exemplification* of an ideal *object* (*EJ*, §64d). But this does not mean that he subsequently holds that when I understand a declarative sentence, I somehow directly latch onto a non-spatio-temporal ideal object—a Fregean sense. Rather, Husserl now recognizes the implications of his view that grasping a signitively presented (e.g. verbally articulated) sense is a conscious *ability*. Grasping the sense here essentially involves an awareness of my ability either to verify the sentence or at least to envisage the circumstances that *would* verify it (*CM*, §24). As Gianfranco Soldati has argued, this view is already clearly present in the doctrine of 'meaning fulfilment' in *Logical Investigations*, but is incompatible with Husserl's official doctrine in that text, according to which the grasping of linguistic meanings is an exemplification of meaning-species (Soldati, *Bedeutung und psychischer Gehalt*, esp. pp. 183–207). Soldati suggests that Husserl should more consistently have spoken of understanding a linguistic meaning as the *instantiation* of an ability, rather than the *exemplification* of a property (p. 185). I have followed this terminological proposal.

⁵⁰ For Husserl's explicit rejection of Platonism, see e.g. *EJ*, §82. David Bell cites as the main evidence for a Fregean reading of Husserl the latter's observation that the tree as perceived (the 'perceptual

So if talk of the phenomenological reduction as essentially an attending to the ‘sense’ or mode of presentation of conscious experiences or their contents is potentially misleading, can we do better? We should take our lead here from Husserl’s insistence that the reduction involves an investigation of the world

sense’), unlike the tree itself, ‘cannot burn away; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real [i.e. causal] properties’ (*Id 1*, §89, cited in Bell, *Husserl*, 188). But this remark, which is in fact the only explicit textual evidence apparently supporting the Fregean interpretation, allows for less recondite alternative readings. For if the transcendental reduction requires a suspension of judgement about the ontological status of any sample objects examined by the phenomenologist, then it follows that the object presented *cannot*, in the phenomenological attitude, be *considered* to have chemical elements or forces, even if it in fact does—and that is precisely Husserl’s point in this passage. For all the phenomenologist knows or cares, the sample tree might be a *hallucinated* tree, and although it is certainly presented *as* a particular, it makes no sense to say of a hallucinated tree that it burns away, or has chemical elements, or has forces.

A few more words on Fregean readings of Husserl are in order here, since these are widespread in anglophone Husserl scholarship (although much less so among continental interpreters). These readings originated in Dagfinn Føllesdal’s influential paper ‘Husserl’s Notion of the Noema’ and have found perhaps their most elaborate development in D. W. Smith and R. McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality*. Smith and McIntyre argue that the later (post-*Logical Investigations*) Husserl holds a ‘mediator’ theory of sense which is designed to explain how intentional experiences can be contentful even when their purported object does not exist (as in hallucination). According to Smith and McIntyre, Husserl attempts to solve this problem by assuming a ‘common element’ in veridical perception and hallucination, which he calls the *noematic sense* of the perception. This noematic sense is, they argue, closely analogous to Frege’s linguistic senses: it is an ‘abstract’, ideal, non-spatio-temporal *entity* distinct from the object, is essentially expressible in language (p. 107, but see pp. 216–19), and is ‘entertained’ in intentional experiences. In the case of successful reference, this ideal entity mediates reference to the object, while ensuring the contentfulness of thought even when there is no object. I want to mention just two fundamental problems with this interpretation. First, in the basic perceptual case, it commits Husserl to the deeply implausible view that the existence-independence of intentional relations requires a *common ontological element*, an entity, shared between situations of successful perceptual reference and situations where there is no, or no relevant, real object. But Husserl nowhere says that he holds such a view and in fact his explicit discussions of this issue sketch a quite different, disjunctivist position, *denying* the ‘common element’ claim (*LI 5*, appendix to §§11 and 20, II/1, p. 425/II, pp. 126–7; *Id 1*, §90; for a detailed account of Husserl’s disjunctivism, see A. D. Smith, ‘Husserl and Externalism’). Secondly, in the case of both perception and non-perceptual judgement, Husserl is emphatic that, *pace* Frege, understanding a sense, as opposed to thinking *about* it, is *not* a ‘grasping’ of it as an object, propositional or otherwise (*FTL*, §42a). Smith and McIntyre seem to acknowledge this (e.g. pp. 80–1). According to them, a Husserlian noematic sense is an ‘abstract’ entity, distinct from the intentional object, by virtue of which an intentional experience is directed to the object (if there is one), but which is itself not only unthematic, but *unconscious* in the act (pp. 119–25). Noematic senses only become conscious in phenomenological reflection (pp. 106, 122). But here Smith and McIntyre seem simply to abandon phenomenology altogether in favour of what Husserl would surely call ‘theory’. To explain the constitutive phenomenological structure of conscious ‘acts’ by recourse to entities which can *in principle* not be consciously given in the act *itself* seems a clear breach of Husserl’s ‘principle of principles’. But it is not difficult to see why they are forced into adopting this un-phenomenological position. For according to Husserl, whether early or late, any intuitively fulfilled (non-empty) consciousness of ideal (*irreal*), non-spatio-temporal items is founded on the consciousness of particulars, involves spontaneity, and is necessarily a thematic consciousness of higher-order intentional *objects* (*LI 2*, §1; *EJ*, §§63, 81b). Since he explicitly denies

itself ‘just as it was previously for me and as it still is’ (*Crisis*, §41, p. 155/152), and not of some item ontologically distinct from it, but that it investigates *this very world* with a ‘special habitualized direction of our interest’ distinct from the interests of the ‘natural attitude’ (*Crisis*, §35, p. 139/136). The *epoché* consists in the philosophizing subject’s adopting a different *attitude* to the world and its denizens, rather than disclosing or thematizing a different *set of objects*. In the natural attitude as understood by Husserl we are interested in the truth-values of our representations of the world. It matters to us whether our perceptions are veridical, whether our judgements are true, whether our pre-reflective evaluative responses and our emotions are adequate or appropriate to whatever elicits them (*Crisis*, §§40–1, pp. 152–5/149–52). By contrast, in the attitude of phenomenological investigation we are, for the duration of that investigation, not concerned with the truth-value, or with the appropriateness to their objects, of our sample representations. It is *irrelevant* to us whether the representations we are using to elucidate, say, the essential structural components of the perception of spatial objects are veridical perceptions or whether they are hallucinations, for in so far as the phenomenal character of a hallucination is indistinguishable from that of a corresponding veridical perception, and indeed is ultimately parasitical on the character of veridical perception, it can serve the phenomenologist just as well.⁵¹ Similarly, if the phenomenologist is investigating the structure of value and evaluative representation, he ‘brackets’ or suspends his ‘natural’ interest in whether his samples satisfy whatever normative constraints he may, in his everyday ‘natural’ life, think appropriate to evaluative representations. In the phenomenological attitude,

just as the perceiving is correlated with the perceived as such, in a sense which rules out the question after the reality of what is perceived, so the valuing is correlated with what is valued as such, and again in such a way that the being of the value (of the

that senses are intentional objects for us when we understand them, this leaves Smith and McIntyre only the appeal to unconsciously grasped idealities. But this appeal makes the understanding of sense entirely mysterious, even more so than does Frege’s theory of a ‘third realm’ (for criticism of the latter, see e.g. Dummett, ‘Frege’s Myth of the Third Realm’). There is no need to attribute to Husserl a theory that is both implausible and profoundly at odds with his central methodological commitments. For an alternative interpretation of perceptual noematic sense, see Drummond, *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-foundational Realism*, ch. 6.

⁵¹ The example of hallucination is also used by Edith Stein, Husserl’s assistant and doctoral student, to illustrate the shift of perspective essential to the reduction. See her *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, §1. On the subjective indistinguishability of perception and hallucination, see *HUA* 23, no. 1, §20, pp. 42–3). On the conceptual dependence of the content of hallucination on the content of perception, see also n. 21, and Soteriou, ‘The Subjective View of Experience and its Objective Commitments’.

valued thing *and* of its actually being valuable) remains out of question. (*Id 1*, §95, p. 198/232)

Any interest in being, reality, or non-being of the world, that is, any theoretical interest directed at knowledge of the world, but also any practical interest in an ordinary sense . . . is barred to us. . . . How could we make perception and what is perceived . . . , also art, science, philosophy, into our transcendental themes without experiencing them through samples . . . ? . . . In a certain manner the philosopher in the *epoché* also has to 'live through naturally' natural life Every kind of *praxis* is really or empathetically [*im Nachverstehen*] lived through by the phenomenologist. . . . [But] through the radical *epoché* any interest in the reality or unreality of the world (in all modalities, including possibility, conceivability, or decidability of such matters) has been put out of play. (*Crisis*, §§52–3; pp. 178–82/175–9)

The phenomenologist temporarily suspends his interest in the truth value or veridicality of the sample representations used in his inquiry, *not* in order to turn away from the actual world (*ibid.*, pp. 178–9/175–6), but in order to understand *it* more adequately qua phenomenon, focusing exclusively on the details of how it is presented to consciousness.⁵² This is a quite different operation from the 'neutrality modification' whereby a content that was previously judged or asserted is now merely entertained (*Id 1*, §31, p. 55/60). If the phenomenologist wants to investigate the *noetic* component of intentional experiences, for example what it is to *perceive* an object, he needs to present to himself, or at least to simulate, also the 'thetic' character of (in this case) perception—the element of belief or conviction normally involved in it—yet somehow *also not go along* with it: to 'put it out of action' (*ibid.*). An empirical analogue to the cognitive attitude Husserl has in mind here, taking again the specific example of perceptual experience, would be a subject's *attending* to his own tendency to be perceptually taken in by a perceptual illusion (e.g. the spikes of a fast-turning wheel stubbornly seeming to stand still) while also, in this empirical case due to countervailing knowledge, not 'going along' with his tendency to believe the appearances.⁵³

⁵² On this point, see especially Merleau-Ponty, 'Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man', 41–95.

⁵³ It is therefore misleading when Heidegger in his 1925 Marburg lectures famously and influentially criticizes Husserl for asking the phenomenologist to 'abstract from the reality of consciousness'. As Heidegger understands Husserl, in the attitude of the reduction 'the real experience . . . is not *posited* and *experienced* as real' (*History of the Concept of Time*, §12, p. 109, my emphases). This formulation blurs a distinction Husserl would insist on. If the focus of the inquiry is, as in Heidegger's objection, on the experience itself (the 'noetic moment'), it is indeed incumbent on the phenomenologist to *experience* for herself whatever features are essential to experiences as they are lived through, including whatever it is that makes them seem actual to the subject (cf. *Crisis*, §52, cited above). But

When the phenomenologist investigates the *noematic* side of intentional experience—for example what it is for an object to be presented as *valuable*, or simply as a *real spatial object*—the reduction commits her to an attitude which is indifferent to whether the sample instances through which she conducts her analysis are *really* valuable, or are veridically perceived spatial objects (as opposed to hallucinated ones). In the latter, perceptual example, such indifference implies suspending any belief that the sample, such as Husserl's apparent apple tree in the garden (*Id 1*, §88), is a *real* apple tree, for this does not matter for the purpose of the phenomenological analysis. It is only in this sense that the tree becomes a 'phenomenon', is not *taken as* a spatio-temporal reality (*Id 1*, §49, p. 93/112), and is consequently not *considered* as a node of real natural forces causally affecting the subject (*Id 1*, §88, p. 182/215).

Contrary to widely held opinion, then, Husserl's transcendental reduction does *not* require an abandoning the world in favour of some Cartesian

Husserl claims, *contra* Heidegger, that this is possible *without* what Heidegger here calls 'positing' the experience—more precisely, without 'going along' with it, that is, without unqualifiedly 'living through' it. Whether he is right on this is itself a matter for substantial phenomenological investigation, but it is far from obvious, as Heidegger takes it to be, that Husserl is precluded from thematizing the being of pre-reflective consciousness merely on account of the phenomenological reduction. Heidegger's objections in §§10–11 of *History of the Concept of Time* do, however, pinpoint a problematic area in Husserl's account, from which much of subsequent phenomenology, including Heidegger's, Sartre's, and Merleau-Ponty's work, takes its departure. Husserl recognizes that intentional experiences (noeses) are, when normally and non-reflectively lived through (*erlebt*), *conscious*, but not as intentional *objects*. But if this is so, they cannot be presented without distortion or modification—i.e. not as what they phenomenologically are—in *reflection*, including phenomenological reflection, if all reflection objectifies. Now Husserl's predominant official view is indeed that reflection makes intentional experiences into objects (*Id 1*, §38). But he is also alive to the problems that arise from this view if experiences are necessarily non-object-like in their primary and fundamental manner of presentation: 'Anger may quickly dissipate through reflection, and modify its content . . . To study it reflectively in its originarity is to study a dissipating anger; which is certainly not pointless, but perhaps is not what was supposed to be studied' (*Id 1*, §70, p. 130/158). One solution to this inconsistency in Husserl's account would be to abandon his 'official' claim that all reflection objectifies. Dan Zahavi has interpreted some intriguing manuscript remarks by Husserl to suggest such a modified view of reflection as not necessarily objectifying the experiences reflected upon (*Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 181–94). A further and distinct issue arising from Husserl's account of pre-reflective experience is whether it is possible in all cases, even in principle, to give 'faithful' linguistic expression (*Id 1*, §24) to what is experienced just as it is experienced, if all linguistic encoding, by virtue of being conceptual, necessarily objectifies (*EJ*, §13, pp. 62–3/60–1). If a pre-reflective experience (*Erlebnis*) is indeed necessarily non-object-like, then it follows that it cannot even in principle be *described* 'just as it is given'. Phenomenological language therefore in this case has to resort to metaphor (as Husserl avowedly does in his talk of pre-reflective consciousness as a 'flow'; *Time*, A, §36) which, in conjunction with negative characterizations, can do no more than point the reader to *re-living* or re-actualizing for herself what is being thus inadequately described (cf. *EJ*, §43b, p. 218/185; *Crisis*, §52, p. 180/176–7).

‘immanent’—empirically subjective—sphere of consciousness, nor does it by itself (i.e. without the *distinct* ‘eidetic’ reduction) purport to disclose a set of ideal, non-spatio-temporal objects. What it does involve is, rather, (a) the temporary suspension of interest in the truth, veridicality, or correctness of the representations of particular samples it investigates, and (b) an attention to these samples that is purified of ‘theoretical assumptions’ in the sense elucidated earlier, with the ultimate aim of disclosing their general phenomenal structures or properties. In some passages Husserl does indeed go further and suggests not only that the actual being or non-being of the world and its denizens is of no interest in the phenomenological attitude, but that from a philosophical, reflective perspective, its non-being is conceivable (*Id 1*, §46). But, rightly understood, these remarks are also compatible with his content externalism. We saw that for conceptualized self-consciousness to be possible, we must have well-confirmed beliefs about a world of real spatial objects, and also that it is not possible, when in the natural attitude, *globally* to suspend our pre-reflective beliefs (*Urdoxa*) in the veridicality of our perceptions. But even in the natural attitude the *specific* contents of our beliefs, both common-sense and scientific, about the real world are in each individual case defeasible, although what is *not* defeasible is the general belief that there is an empirically real world. Secondly, Husserl maintains, like Hume, that a complete breakdown of the specific regularities of experience that have so far governed and indeed constituted the phenomenal world for us is conceivable; although, *contra* Hume, he seems to think that the thoroughgoing ‘consonance’ (*Einstimmigkeit*) of past experience does provide rational grounds for dismissing this theoretical possibility as unlikely to be actualized (*ibid.*). This implies that while the veridicality of *all* the specific contents of our past and present perceptual beliefs *can* globally and intelligibly be doubted at the philosophical reflective level (although not at the immersed level of the natural attitude), such doubts are rationally unmotivated (*EJ*, §78, pp. 370–1/306–7).

I have argued that Husserl’s method of transcendental reduction is misunderstood when interpreted as a form of Cartesianism in a philosophically objectionable sense, and that, on the contrary, Husserl is committed to an externalist theory of intentionality. But while the arguments offered here may have shown the reduction to be philosophically undamaging, we may still ask: what *positive* contribution does the reduction make to philosophical understanding? For Husserl, its crucial contribution lies in making it possible to understand explicitly or transparently *how* the world is constituted in—how

it can manifest itself to—consciousness in the natural attitude. It is only through adopting the stance of the phenomenological reduction—even if only intermittently and for short periods of time—that the natural attitude itself and its objects become adequately transparent to the subject. Its achievement is thus ultimately to make possible the self-explication of subjectivity and its necessary correlate, the world as it shows up for the subject. The reason why the natural attitude cannot itself achieve such self-transparency is that it is, as Husserl defines it, necessarily concerned with the *objects* of consciousness (*Crisis*, §§38, 40). In ordinary sense perception we are focused on some part of the perceptual environment, in everyday linguistic judgments we are interested in the states of affairs they represent and whether they represent them truthfully, in everyday evaluation we are concerned about whatever it is that we value. But this very focus on the objects *precludes* any explicit understanding of the aspectual modes of presentation which are necessary for these objects to manifest themselves as they do to consciousness. This is so for two reasons. First, because a simultaneous thematizing of the objects and of the ways in which they are consciously presented would involve a bifurcation of thematic interest in a single intentional experience or project which would be tantamount to a self-division of the subject:⁵⁴ I cannot simultaneously focus on, say, answering the question whether a current experience as of an apple tree is veridical—a project which might involve various tests to confirm the experience—and on answering the question of what in the experience makes it the case that the apparent tree can appear to me as a spatial object at all, for the attempt to answer the latter question forces me into an entirely different direction of investigation. For Husserl, the importance of this realization and of its implications for philosophical method can hardly be overestimated, although it has only been inadequately recognized in the philosophical tradition. Secondly, and just as importantly, many intentional compartments in the natural attitude involve ‘senses’ (i.e. conscious aspects or ‘moments’) which are *implicit*, that is unthematic, if the compartment is to be what it is—think of the bodily self-awareness involved

⁵⁴ This argument is premised on Husserl’s claim—which I cannot defend here—that on one (abstract) level of subjectivity, which he calls the transcendental ego, the subject at any moment *is* (or ‘lives in’) the conscious activity of being engaged with some thematic object or other (*Id 2*, §§22–6; *EJ*, §19, p. 90/84–5). This is Husserl’s phenomenological recasting of Kant’s notion of transcendental subjectivity (*Critique of Pure Reason*, esp. B157–B159). A thematic engagement in two different cognitive projects simultaneously is therefore incompatible with what Kant would have called the transcendental unity of apperception. For a detailed argument to this effect, see O’Shaughnessy, *The Will*, vol. ii, esp. pp. 22–38.

in skiing down a slope, or of the phenomenon of self-deception. One of the central tasks of phenomenology as Husserl conceives it is the *explication of what is implicit* in the life of (necessarily embodied) consciousness (*CM*, §20, esp. pp. 83–5/46–8).⁵⁵ But any such explication obviously requires a certain stepping back from those ‘absorbed compartments’ while yet also retaining a grip on what is presented in them as it is presented. Husserl himself sometimes describes this mode of attention to the manner of givenness of experience and its intentional contents as ‘disinterested’ (*CM*, §15, p. 73/35) and thus aligns it with a traditional characterization of aesthetic experience—a faithful attention to what is given as it is given, engaged in ‘for its own sake’, but contributing to the ultimate goal of ‘authenticity’ in Husserl’s sense: the self-clarification of the subject and of its correlative phenomenal world.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this essay has been to show that Husserl’s often misunderstood methodological theses do not stand in the way of a serious engagement with his substantive first-order analyses and claims. In particular, they do not commit the phenomenologist to Cartesian content internalism, but explicitly recognize the necessarily embodied nature of potentially self-conscious finite subjectivity, and the fundamental importance of agency for subjecthood. But there is surely an as yet unaddressed basic question invited by Husserl’s phenomenological project and the conception of philosophy associated with it. Why, you may ask, should we be prepared to follow Husserl in considering the investigation of the structures involved in the conscious manifestation of the world to subjectivity to be the fundamental philosophical issue? From a more traditional, epistemologically or metaphysically motivated, perspective, the central question would instead appear to be how these putatively correlative structures of subjectivity and phenomenal worldhood

⁵⁵ This implies that, while Husserlian phenomenology aims at descriptive, rather than causally explanatory, truths, it has rather more than the modest ambition, often associated with the later Wittgenstein, of merely providing a transparent overview of what we knew already before we started doing philosophy. Rather, the insights of phenomenology are often striking and new, for it sees as one of its main tasks the explication of what is only implicitly conscious in the ‘natural attitude’. On some aspects of Husserl’s account of implicit conscious contents, see Poellner, ‘Non-Conceptual Content, Experience and the Self’.

relate to the ‘world as it is in itself’. After all, with respect to the subject’s relation to the world, all that Husserl’s transcendental efforts, if successful, have shown is that a potentially self-conscious finite subject has to have, and to be able to think of itself as having, a body with phenomenal properties, experienced and conceived as having causal powers, located in an environment of other such bodies. It does not tell us how all these *phenomenal* objects and features relate to a metaphysically accurate account of the real world, or indeed to scientific accounts of subjectivity in terms of computational or neurophysiological properties. To be sure, Husserl *also* gives us a (transcendental idealist) metaphysics, but I have argued that this is in principle separable from the phenomenological analyses which make up the great bulk of his work. Husserl’s metaphysics is, both in principle and in terms of the actual thematic focus exhibited by the overwhelming majority of his writings, evidently extraneous to his main philosophical preoccupations. Irrespective of his later self-interpretation as, ultimately, also a metaphysician, the actual prevailing emphases of his work consign metaphysics to the margins, and his practice is therefore in this respect comparable to what we find in central texts of existential phenomenology, such as Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*. How might one justify this ‘phenomenological turn’—the shift of philosophical orientation from issues of factual epistemology (‘what can we know about the actual world?’) and from metaphysics to, ultimately, a phenomenology of the human world? The issue becomes particularly pressing if one regards Husserl’s own explicit aim—the provision of an apodictic foundation for objective science, including the empirical sciences—to be neither particularly compelling nor attainable.

In order to understand the deeper reasons why phenomenology came to dominate much of twentieth-century continental European philosophy, quite independently of what Husserl’s own explicit motivations may have been, it is crucial to bear in mind that it is not in competition with a scientific understanding of the physical correlates of consciousness. While Husserl resists the conflation of empirically ‘genetic’ (i.e. causal) questions with constitutive questions, this does not impugn the legitimacy of the former in their own domains. For example, when we try to cure a person’s depression, the best and most useful kind of account of this person’s condition may sometimes be one couched, not in terms of phenomenal consciousness and conscious motivating reasons, but in terms of a deficiency of neurotransmitters like serotonin or catecholamine in the brain. In other cases, neurophysiological

accounts and psychological theories making use of phenomenological concepts may usefully complement each other. The general point here is that the application in empirical psychology, or indeed in everyday ‘folk psychology’, of concepts developed in a transcendental-phenomenological context does not conflict with scientific neurophysiological explanations of mental phenomena just in case the phenomenal properties adverted to in the former kinds of explanation are strongly supervenient on (i.e. co-variant with) scientific properties simultaneously exemplified.⁵⁶ And there is absolutely nothing in Husserl’s phenomenology that commits him to denying strong supervenience of phenomenal on scientific properties at the empirical (‘natural’) level of inquiry.

What does, however, *de facto* cease to be of focal concern to philosophy influenced by the phenomenological turn initiated by Husserl, are purely theoretical questions, pertaining neither to phenomenology nor to science, that continue to dominate much of analytic philosophy—questions about what might *metaphysically explain* such supervenience relations. The philosophical reasons which render this relative indifference to such traditional metaphysical questions most compelling can arguably not be found in Husserl, nor in the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, but in the work of Nietzsche, and they lie beyond the scope of this essay.⁵⁷ Consonant with these, and whatever Husserl’s own explicit motivations may have been, one of the most fruitful ways of understanding the broader significance of the phenomenological turn he inaugurated may, in the end, have been expressed by the existentialist Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. According to Husserl, as Camus understood him:

thinking is not unifying or making the appearance familiar under the guise of a great principle. Thinking is learning all over again to see, directing one’s consciousness, making of every image a privileged place. In other words, phenomenology declines to explain the world. . . . [From this] apparent modesty of thought that limits itself to describing what it declines to explain . . . results paradoxically a profound enrichment of experience and the rebirth of the world in its prolixity . . . It affirms solely that without any unifying principle, thought can still take delight in describing and understanding every aspect of experience⁵⁸

⁵⁶ The notion of strong supervenience alluded to here is Kim’s. If A and B are families of properties, then A strongly supervenes on B just in case, necessarily, for each x and each property F in A, if x has F, then there is a property G in B such that x has G and, necessarily, if any y has G, then it has F. (Kim, *Supervenience and Mind*, 65.)

⁵⁷ I have attempted to reconstruct these reasons in ‘Affect, Value and Objectivity’, esp. Section 5.

⁵⁸ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 44–5.

ABBREVIATIONS AND EDITIONS OF HUSSERL'S WORKS USED

Translations from Husserl's writings are mine. Where page references to Husserl's writings are given in the essay, the first of these in each case refers to the German edition cited below. In those cases where there is also an English edition, a second page reference, separated from the first by a slash, refers to this edition, details of which are given below next to the German edition.

- CM* *Cartesianische Meditationen*, ed. E. Ströker (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1995). **English edition:** *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977)
- Crisis* *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel, 2nd edn. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962). **English edition:** *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970)
- EJ* *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. L. Landgrebe (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985). **English edition:** *Experience and Judgement*, trans. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973)
- FTL* *Formale und transzendente Logik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1981). **English edition:** *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969)
- HUA 8* *Erste Philosophie (1923–1924). Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, ed. R. Boehm (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959). (Husserliana, vol. 8)
- HUA 23* *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung*, ed. E. Marbach (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980). (Husserliana, vol. 23)
- HUA 24* *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie. Vorlesungen 1906/07*, ed. U. Melle (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984). (Husserliana, vol. 24)
- HUA 26* *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre. Sommersemester 1908*, ed. U. Panzer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987). (Husserliana, vol. 26)
- Id 1* *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1980).

- English edition:** *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982).
- Id 2* *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Zweites Buch*, ed. M. Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952). **English edition:** *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989).
- LI 1–6* *Logische Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1980). **English edition:** *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 2001).
- Time* *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)*, ed. R. Boehm (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966). **English edition:** *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, trans. J. B. Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990).
- TS* *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907*, ed. U. Claesges (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973). **English edition:** *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*, trans. R. Rojcewicz (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997).

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